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THE ANCIENT WORLD AND CHRISTIANITY.

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TRANSLATED BY A. HARWOOD HOLMDEN.

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THE ANCIENT WORLD

AND

CHRISTIANITY.

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BY

E. DE PRESSENSÉ, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF
"THE EARLY YEARS OF CHRISTIANITY," "A STUDY OF ORIGINS," ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

ANNIE HARWOOD HOLMDEN.

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PREFACE.

THE conflict between science and Christianity has been of late years waxing closer and hotter. The natural sciences, elated by their magnificent triumphs, have claimed as their own the whole domain of knowledge, ignoring altogether the higher life and the God from whom it springs, and attributing all effects to the action of mechanical causes. The advance of materialism has not, however, gone on unchecked. We have seen of late some of the most eminent representatives of natural science, men who could not be suspected of any undue religious bias, limiting its sphere to the observation of the phenomena which come within the range of the senses, and affirming its incompetence to enter the higher region of first causes. This was notably the attitude taken by Professor Virchow at the Jubilee of the University of Edinburgh. Without pronouncing any opinion on the origin of things, he refused to relegate it to the domain of the unknowable, and distinctly defined the limits beyond which natural science cannot legitimately press its methods of observation. The blatant atheism of our streets and stump orators knows nothing of these limitations of true science, and imagines that the evolutions of matter

explain, not only all natural, but all spiritual phenomena. The same ignorance is manifested even by grave critics, who affirm that the progress of science is incompatible with theism, and thus efface the whole moral history of man. But wherever the just limitation of positive science by itself is admitted, there is the implied recognition of a higher sphere to be explored by methods appropriate to it. The great organ of knowledge in the moral world is conscience, of which the law of duty, inseparable from free-will, is the fundamental axiom.

In preparing the present work, we have traced with profound satisfaction, the indications of this Divine law through all the religions of antiquity as these have come down to us in their sacred books. Everywhere and always we have found the voice of conscience uplifted in support of the law of right, even when this had become gravely obscured in the national worship. Everywhere we have found the soul of man soaring above the earth and aspiring after immortal life, crying out for a God greater than any local and national divinities, and uttering bitter lamentations because it failed to find that which it sought, and, while it perceived the good, was powerless to achieve it. And shall we be told that a soul, thus exercised with strong and holy desires, is nothing more than an aggregate of atoms, held together by material laws? Our belief in the spiritual nature of man is not a blind and bigoted adherence to a creed; it is a deliberate conviction only confirmed by the results of free inquiry.

Again, when we find that eighteen centuries ago, in the decadence of a world ready to perish, the unutterable groaning of creation was answered by a sovereign mani-

festation of holiness and love, which caused a new river of life to flow through the thirsty land, this great fact, attested by unquestionable documents, gives confirmation to our faith in Christ. And in this troubled evening of the nineteenth century, when it is easy to forecast the gloomy future of a democracy without God, and consequently without any adequate moral sanctions, our only hope of an effective salvation for society lies in that great spiritual force, which eighteen centuries ago put new life and vigour into a state of society as effete and troubled as that of to-day.

There seems to us a peculiar interest at the present time in tracing by the light of history, the manifestations and victorious efforts of this great moral force. We recognise fully that in such an investigation, facts must not be wrested to support theories, and that impartiality is a sacred duty. It has been our earnest endeavour to conform to this canon of all true criticism.

E. DE PRESSENSÉ.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT is impossible to enter intelligently into the history of the rise and progress of Christianity, without taking at least a preliminary glance at the antecedent moral history of the ancient world. We feel the more strongly the necessity of this introductory study, because there is a school which disputes the originality and distinctive character of Christianity, maintaining that it gives us nothing more than a synthesis of pre-existing elements under the form of a new myth. It is the result, we are told, of the impact of the Greek with the Jewish mind in an age of universal syncretism. This thesis, brilliantly reproduced in the learned work of M. Havet,[1] can only be sustained or refuted by the moral history of the ancient world. We are firmly persuaded that if, instead of citing as evidence isolated passages (often truly admirable) from certain Greek writers, the critic were to follow out their train of connection in the various religious or philosophic systems, he would have to confess that no parallel can be drawn between the Gospel and Hellenism. Hellenism is essentially dualistic. Hence it fails, like all the religions of the East, to account for the existence of the material element, except by identifying it with the principle of evil, which is thus accepted as a part of the normal and necessary order of things.

[1] "Le Christianisme et ses origines" (Ernest Havet).

But the contrast between such a religion and that of Christ only comes out fully if we look at Christianity in its pristine purity, before its stream had been rendered turbid by the admixture of foreign elements, derived largely from old world traditions. The representatives of Christianity have often (to use the familiar figure of Hippolytus) been like those who patch up old garments, for they have only put a new face on some of the worn-out errors of paganism.[1] We shall only learn to distinguish this hybrid religion, known in the Church as heresy, from the pure Gospel, by a just appreciation of the religious and philosophical development of the ancient world.

Let us not be misunderstood. While we maintain that the originality and superiority of the Christian doctrine is clearly established by a careful examination of antecedent religious systems, we do not deny that it presents many analogies and points of contact with them. We utterly repudiate the apologetics which dismiss all the virtues of paganism as *splendida vitia*, and its often sublime intuitions of moral and religious truth as the *mirage* of the desert. We are deeply convinced, like the Alexandrine Fathers, that paganism retained and developed important elements of truth, and we are very far from saying that these can have been only the residue of an inspired tradition. The soul of man can never be regarded as a blank sheet of parchment, passively receiving the impress of a primeval revelation. "God Himself," says Theodoret, "has graven ineffaceable characters on man's deepest nature."[2] Or, as Clement of Alexandria says, "The soul turns to the light, as the plant to the sun."[3] Justin Martyr was not wrong when he said that

[1] Hippolytus, ("Philosophoumena," p. 94).

[2] Τὰ θεοχάρακτα γράμματα, (Theodoret, p. 483).

[3] Clement of Alexandria.

there is a seed of the Word in the soul. We go further and say that the pagan world was never left to itself. The natural revelation was quickened and made effectual by the direct operation of God, who, to use the figure of a Father of the Church, makes His rain to fall upon the desert as well as on more favoured soil.[1] Thus pagan humanity had a vague yearning after all that was noblest in Christianity. May we not say that it stretched out its hands towards it for the satisfaction it failed to find in itself? It was no small thing to have thus learned its own spiritual ineptitude.

And here comes out the capital difference between the religion of Christ and all that went before it. Christianity is not primarily teaching or doctrine, though it embraces this. It is primarily a great fact; and as M. Scherer has well said in reference to M. Havet's work, it claims to bring effectual help through a Person who stands alone in history.

Undoubtedly all religions assume in some way the task of relieving and raising humanity. But if we compare the way in which they have fulfilled this function, with that which Christianity has given to the world, we shall see in all their tentative efforts to save an unhappy race, only another expression of the human yearnings which Christ alone can satisfy. Hence all the analogies pointed out between the Gospel teaching and the religious and philosophical conceptions of the ancient world, do not detract at all from its originality. However lofty the ideal of the old teachers of religion, it is still nothing more than an ideal, and there still remains the same interval between it and the Gospel, as between an idea and its full realisation. The deeper the yearning of the ancient world, the greater the need for the response which Christianity alone can give. The keener the hunger, the stronger the

[1] Theodoret, p. 484.

cry for the bread, which the famishing soul cannot evolve for itself out of the void within. Speaking of the sorrows and aspirations of humanity, M. Renan says, using a bold poetic figure, that with our tears we make for ourselves a God. We change one word and say that with our tears we call for a God, and that these holy tears are the very anointing of the great Healer.[1]

Before entering on a review of the religious and philosophical development of the ancient world, we will attempt to define a little more clearly our general idea of what is commonly called the great preparation for the Gospel.

We have said enough to show in what sense we use the word evolution in relation to history. Without entering at all into the scientific question of the transformation of species, by virtue of a power of development inherent in themselves, we do refuse absolutely to identify this internal principle (supposing its existence proved) with mere mechanical force. If it could be thus identified, it would follow that there is no power in the world but motion, and motion governed not by mind or will or moral force, but by a blind mechanical necessity. In such a case there could be no history at all in the true sense. We can never admit that mind can be identified with a mere combination of atoms. We maintain, with Tyndall, that between motion, which is the play of mechanical forces, and the consciousness of motion, which is thought, there is a great gulf. Reason would do violence

[1] We apply the same criticism to the learned work of M. Leblois, "Les Bibles et les institutions religieuses de l'humanite," vol. iii., as to M. Havet's book. It is of great value as a collection of noble testimonies from the human conscience in the ancient world. But, on the one hand, the author neglects almost invariably to define the main thought to be illustrated by these admirable fragments; and, on the other hand, he ignores the unique character of Christianity as the religion of fulfilment. These "Bibles of humanity" are full of sublime aspirations, but they are found wanting, because they cannot bridge over the gulf between the ideal and the real.

to its first law, if it were to subordinate thought, mind, the moral life, to matter in motion.

If the cause is greater than the effect, it must at least possess that which the effect possesses. We are convinced, with Socrates, Plato, and Descartes, that the cause, the principle which gave us being, possesses in its perfection that which is but imperfectly developed in ourselves, the creatures of yesterday. Hence we attribute the reason and thought which we find in ourselves, to the principle of all things, and recognise that in Him they must exist in a state of perfection. It follows that God must be absolute thought, absolute reason, which is but another way of expressing the infinite, of which we have an inward intuition, though our finite minds cannot fully apprehend it.

Again, the very marks of design in creation would suffice to set aside the theory of merely mechanical evolution, which is repugnant to the most elementary psychology. But we observe in ourselves another element beside thought. We find in the depths of our conscience, a law of obligation, associated with our sense of personal responsibility -the sacred, irrepressible intuition of moral good which appeals to our will. This appeal would be meaningless if we were not free agents, for there must be first the willing to do good. This power to will and to do that which is right, is the fulfilment of the highest intention and possibility of our being—the very crown of our liberty. Again tracing back the effect to the cause, and attributing to the cause the perfect realisation of that which we find in the effect, we recognise in God not only absolute reason, but absolute liberty, absolute good, in a word the moral life in fullest power. We have thus liberty both in the cause and the effect, in God and in man. Henceforth we have to watch the progress not of a fatalistic evolution, but of history and religious history.

History, as it appears to us, is a perpetual conflict between two contrary principles, which we recognise under the most diverse forms—the principle of the good and true, and the principle of evil.

This dualism of history implies that humanity is not now in its normal condition. Had it remained in its primeval state, history would indeed have been nothing but the record of steady, unimpeded progress and development. If the free-will of man had continued in perfect harmony with that of God, history would have been one prolonged manifestation of this correspondence and of its blessed results. Humanity would have developed like a great tree which grows erect towards heaven.

But we say that the primitive harmony between man and God has not continued. Evil has come into the world, evil which cannot be regarded as mere imperfection, arising out of the necessary predominance of the physical, in the early stages of our existence, and sure to be outgrown, like the garments of our childhood. Evil is in our view an abnormal thing, which does violence to order, "heaven's first law." As we cannot deny its existence, so neither can we attribute it to God, for this would imply that God, He whom we have called the Absolute Good, is either weak or wicked. There remains no alternative but to attribute evil to man. When, where, under what form, did the mysterious ordeal of man's free-will take place? By what fatal solidarity have the effects of an initial error come upon all the race? No graver problem than this can exercise the thought of man. Yet it is undisputable that there never has been a religion which has not preserved, under the form of a myth, the memory of a distant past, in which everything was better than now, and which has not groaned under the weary heritage of sorrow and the curse.

It is obvious that if the world were wholly given up to the power of evil, history would be as much a blank as if

good had reigned with undisputed sway, history being understood to be the record of one long, unbroken conflict between the rival powers of good and evil. How could this be waged if there were not two champions standing face to face? History—that is, conflict issuing in moral victory—is only possible, because man has not been abandoned by the Divine will to the consequences of his alienation, which would else have led him by an inexorable fatality, to the hopeless death which awaits all life cut off from its source. The supernatural, as we understand it, proceeds from this act of pardon and love, the supreme act of the Divine freedom. The chain of natural cause and effect is broken in the moral order after the Fall, that a new beginning may be made, or rather that a new restoring and repairing force may be introduced. There is nothing arbitrary in this, nothing contrary to nature rightly understood, for the result is to restore the true order of nature. The supernatural is miserably falsified and misconceived when it is limited to isolated prodigies. The outward miracle is but the secondary though necessary manifestation of that free act of love which makes reparation possible.

If, then, there is such a thing as history, and religious history, it is because the Absolute Good, who is at once supreme love and liberty, has so willed it. It is because He has resolved to raise and to save fallen man. This work of reparation and salvation must be in harmony with the moral laws, without which liberty has no existence either in God or man. It cannot then consist simply in a decree of pardon. It demands reconciliation. Undoubtedly infinite love must take the initiative, for the fallen creature lies groaning on the earth, bruised by his futile attempt at revolt. He has, moreover, been overcome of evil, and brought into bondage by it, and though he may often chafe at the galling fetters, he is no less a slave. His remorse cannot set him free. Man must come back

to God with a penitent and broken heart, frankly accepting the mournful consequences of his rebellion, and making a complete surrender to the Divine will. This he cannot do in his natural state. Hence it was needful that the Son of man, who was to be his representative in the great conflict, should come from a higher sphere than this sin-defiled earth, though He came to dwell as man among men. Let no one say that, coming thus from God, He could not represent humanity. This would be to ignore the dignity and glory of man's birth. He is himself of Divine race, a son of God, made in His image. He is never more truly man than when he perfectly reproduces that image; the Divine is the most human. The higher life is that light of the eternal Word, which "lightens every man as he cometh into the world," as we read in the most profound of our Gospels.[1] Hence man is only complete in God. There is his ideal, the full realisation of his being. Therefore the Son of God could perfectly represent humanity, on the one condition that He became "in all things like unto His brethren," living a truly human life, fighting man's battles, weeping his tears, treading with wayworn feet over the ruts and rough stones that lie along life's common pathway, and at length watering it with His atoning blood. Nor is this all. There must also be in Him, as man's true representative, a response to his deepest spiritual longings and needs.

All history before the coming of Christ has but this one end in view: to prepare the way before Him by a series of dispensations, all designed to overcome the opposition of humanity. Only this preparative work is constantly hindered and even partially frustrated by the ever-powerful agency of the principle of evil. There is no arbitrary interference with man's free-will, even when it impels him to his ruin. God permits the ravages of evil, with all its

[1] John i. 9.

awful consequences. This is a great mystery, but it is the necessary correlative of free-will in God and man. If man were under a fatal necessity to choose the right, evils involving whole generations might be averted, but the moral world would have lost its axis. Nor must we forget that the most terrible consequences of evil recoil upon itself, so that it becomes its own chastisement. Again, sorrow itself is fruitful of good, for it deepens in the heart the void which God alone can fill. Nor do we find anywhere in history a page of unrelieved suffering. It is lighted up by pure and tender joys, the smiles of a Father, which save the sufferer from despair.

Yet, unless we abandon ourselves to a frivolous optimism, we can but shudder at the tragedies of history. Heart and mind would reel in the contemplation of them, but for the thought that the present life is but as a lightning flash in the eyes of infinite love, which has eternal ages before it for the fulfilment of its work. Such love does not fail, is not discouraged; and as it is also absolute justice, it will in the end equalise the conditions of the moral conflict for all the combatants, and adjust the inequities of the present sphere. But even this consolation will not suffice, unless, through all the dark clouds of history, we discern the invisible Champion who is truly fighting for us even when He seems to be against us, like the Divine Unknown, who is set forth in a sublime symbol, wrestling all night with one feeble mortal. By the first morning ray which dispelled the darkness of the night, the patriarch recognised his God. From the deep wounds received from His hand, streams of immortal life were to flow forth.

Read beneath this light from heaven, the motto of history is not chance or fatality, but redemption. Every other solution of the enigma of our destinies, leads to the blank pessimism which identifies both man and his Maker with the principle of evil. After such a conclusion, it

only remains to curse God and die; or, more bitter still, to accept life as a cruel jest.

It is not our object here to vindicate, but only briefly to state, the leading truths of Christianity, as we hold them. At this elevation, there ceases to be any distinction between sacred and profane history. All history becomes sacred, since no branch of the human race is left out of the great work of Gospel preparation. God may have revealed Himself more directly to one nation, but His Spirit has been at work in the heathen world also, as it brooded over chaos in the organisation of the cosmos.

Let us look more closely at the great object of the work of preparation. It was not designed to make humanity bring forth its own Saviour—for this it could not do—but to prepare it to receive Him and to join itself to Him. Now the only way to prepare it to receive this royal gift, was to arouse the desire after it. The scope of the whole work of preparation, then, is to kindle and fan to a flame this desire after a Redeemer. Plato said, with profound meaning, that desire is the child of poverty. "To desire," he added, "is to love that which as yet we do not possess, that which is not and of which we feel the lack." The first condition for the development of desire is then a deep sense of our present poverty. The more this poverty is felt, the stronger the desire will grow. But there must also be some anticipation of the object sought, else desire will flag or sink into despair. The object of the work of preparation is to foster this spirit of desire and of expectation.

The aspect of this great subject which comes specially before us in the present volume, is the preparation for the Gospel that was going on in the ancient world. We recognise at the outset, that this preparation assumed a unique character in Judea. There, in the midst of much that was purely human, God made Himself known by positive revelations and direct manifestations of His power

and presence, the authentic record of which we have in the pages of the Bible. It was necessary that the land where Messiah was to be born, should be preserved from the pollutions of idolatry. There is a striking correspondence, however, between the great phases of the religious evolution in this land of revelation, and those of the great historic nations of antiquity. Both are in harmony with the law of progressive reciprocity between the Divine and the human, on which hinges the moral character of religion. We shall recognise also that all the institutions and revelations of Judaism tend to foster the desire for salvation, which is the great end of the Gospel preparation everywhere.

If we turn now to this work as carried on in the heathen nations of antiquity, we find it admirably summed up in Paul's preaching at Athens: "The God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one every nation of men for to dwell on the face of the earth, and hath determined their appointed seasons and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from every one of us."

This is the true keynote of the philosophy of history. To seek after this unknown God through all the gloom of the pagan night, only illumined by a few immortal truths, shining like stars of hope; to renew the search again and again, urged on by the restless yearning after the Divine, which man can never quell; to recognise after each fresh attempt, his powerlessness to solve his own difficulties or satisfy his own aspirations; this is the Divine work of preparation going on in the pagan world. Thus that world learns by bitter experience, the same truths which are taught by revelation in Judea. The whole history of the ancient heathen world, is nothing else than this long wandering of the human soul in search of the still "unknown God," the coming Deliverer.

In this groping after God, the incentive to perseverance is conscience. This has the immense advantage of being based upon a direct certainty, a sacred obligation. Thus it is a much safer guide in the intuition of the Divine, than speculative reason which is prone to lose itself in abstractions.

Strange to say, nature, in which "the everlasting power and Divinity of God" are so clearly to be seen, has always been (contrary to its original intention) the great hindrance to man's finding the true God, who is close to him all the time, and speaking through the voice of nature. And yet, even in the darkest hours of naturism, conscience has lifted up its protest. Under all skies, we hear its inspired voice above the gross superstitions and subtle speculations of pantheism. It is ever reaching out after its moral ideal, dimly discerned through the incense clouds of ceremonial worship. It is ever lamenting that it has not realised its ideal, and its penitential wail rises above festive chants and pæans of glory. It never ceases to call for a God greater than any it has yet known.

The religious development of the pagan world begins with nature worship. This naturism sets its stamp upon all the religions of the ancient East, though not to the extinction of their purer elements. It is, however, an influence ultimately fatal to them all. The attempt to find God in nature (which does not *contain*, though it does *manifest*, Him) always ends, as in Buddhism, in mere negation. In Greece, naturism rises gradually into humanism, which gives predominance to the moral idea in the conception of the Divine, but never wholly frees itself from dualism.

Thus Greek humanism, under its most perfect form, after purifying the popular religion, finally deals it a death-blow, substituting for it only an elevated, though still imperfect, moral ideal. It thus intensifies the

aspiration after a better religion. This is fostered by all the outward conditions of that remarkable period. Through the Roman conquest, the barriers between East and West had been thrown down. The generation contemporary with Christ, found itself in the thick of a general battle of the gods and of the old religions. Perceiving how the travail of twenty centuries had thus ended in an abortion, it put up to God, through its noblest voices, a prayer, half choked in sobs, that He would at length open the heavens and send down the true God so earnestly yet vainly sought. The most expressive symbol of this state of mind is found in that mysterious altar, inscribed "*To the Unknown God*," which Paul saw in Athens when he carried the Gospel to that city.

Such, in broad outline, is the work of Gospel preparation, to the detailed study of which we now address ourselves.[1]

[1] It is not our intention to attempt an epitome of the great works which deal with the moral history of the ancient world. We have referred to many of these in the course of the present work, especially in illustration of the various systems dealing with the formation of myths. We may simply mention here the learned works of M. de Rougemont, "Le peuple primitif," and "Les deux cités." The particular aim of the writer is to show that the elements of truth found in the paganism of both East and West are derived from primitive tradition. The view taken by M. César Malan, in his work "Les grands traits de l'histoire religieuse de l'humanité et du Christianisme," approaches much more nearly to our own. He divides the history of the ancient world into two great periods, corresponding the one to paganism, the other to Judaism—"(1) L'homme cherchant Dieu; (2) Dieu cherchant l'homme." The various theories relating to the origin and evolution of religion in history, are discussed in my "Study of Origins" (Book IV. chap. iii.), from the materialistic evolutionism of Herbert Spencer and the pantheism of Hegel, to the idealism of Pfleiderer and Réville.

BOOK I.

THE ANCIENT EAST.

CHAPTER I.

THE STARTING-POINT OF THE RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION.

LET us begin with man as far back as science can carry us, that is to say, at the close of the Tertiary, or at latest, at the beginning of the Quaternary period.[1] At this stage the only documents we have to decipher are some rude implements or shapeless remains found in caves, in company with the bones of animals now extinct, or which must have migrated to other climes under the influence of the later geological crises which gave to the surface of our planet its present form. We find in man, even at this primitive stage, all the marks of intellectual and moral superiority, although he wears for royal vesture only the skin of a wild beast, and has as his sole sceptre a roughly-hewn flint, which he uses at once as a weapon and a tool. Yet even these are tokens not to be mistaken of his kingly estate, for he could not have made himself clothing out of the spoils of the chase, or fashioned the roadside flint into an instrument of service, unless he had possessed the faculty of rising above the sensations of the moment, and associating the future with the past by means of reflection on his own experience. The very presence of the tool bespeaks in its maker a power of memory and of prevision, the reason which can generalise, and hence can produce an instrument adapted for his use in war or work. To the primitive garb of skins we find man soon adding some uncouth ornament. However rude the art, it reveals an instinct

[1] I have treated this subject at some length in my "Study of Origins," Book IV., ch. ii. I refer the reader to the decisive conclusions drawn by M. Quatrefages in his book entitled "Hommes fossiles et hommes sauvages. Études d'Anthropologie." Also to his articles on the same subject in the *Journal des Savans*, for 1885 (Paris, Baillière).

for the beautiful, the desire to modify the crude form of things.

Again: upon the delicate bones of the reindeer killed by him in hunting, he draws his own likeness and retraces the scenes of the chase, sometimes with singular vividness and accuracy. There is an attempt to represent objects so as to recognise them. This is one of the distinctive characteristics of man, who is never satisfied, like the brute creation, with expressing sensations and desires by signs, but names and describes objects. Further there is in this primitive drawing the germ of all art, which begins by recalling to the mind of man some object he has seen, but gives, at the same time, a mental impression of it, which will by-and-by transfigure and idealise the reality. The rod of command gives the first rough suggestion of the organisation of the family and of society, arguing the presence of intellectual faculties, which are traceable in the skull even of the troglodyte.[1] It is not surprising then that in spite of his muscular inferiority, this cave-man should have got the better of the mammoths and bears which waged war with him, and should have outlived that great lowering of the temperature of the earth which proved fatal to so many of the larger animals of the Tertiary, and even of the Quaternary period. The struggle for life must have been a hard one for him nevertheless, especially as his weapons were as yet of the rudest, and ill-adapted to resist the horns and claws of the monsters by which he was surrounded. But they were wielded by a being with mind, and herein lay the secret of his victory.

Even in this dim period, which was one stern struggle for existence, this rude fighter showed himself capable of higher thoughts, embracing not only his own past and future, but reaching beyond the limits of this earthly sphere. In the first place, he buried his dead, thus showing that the affection which united him to his kindred, outlived the death of the body; nay more, that he had some intuition of the prolongation of their existence, for he laid their weapons and tools beside them in the grave. Even the

[1] The skull of the old man of Cro-Magnon was found by Broca to be superior in capacity by 119 centim. to the average given by 125 Parisian skulls of the 19th century. See Quatrefages, "Hommes fossiles," p. 65.

bones of little children were sometimes placed within the skull of the father, as though to perpetuate the family relation in the strange abode of the dead. Skulls belonging to the Neolithic age have been found perforated, thus showing that trepanning was practised in this remote period.

It has been generally supposed that this treatment was resorted to as a means of exorcising the evil spirit, which was the reputed cause of nervous diseases. It seems certain that the trepanned skulls of the dead were used as charms against these same evil spirits, whether for the benefit of the deceased or of the survivors. We thus get a glimpse of a conflict waged by primeval man against the powers of the invisible world, more formidable than mammoth or aurochs. "The study of prehistoric trepanning," says Broca, "proves beyond a question that the men of the Neolithic age believed in a life in which the dead retained their individuality, for these amulets were placed within the skull of the dead man, and were intended to secure for him happiness and exemption from evil."[1] We conclude, with M. Quatrefages, that the belief in another life, and in the continued identity of the individual, existed in the earliest times of the geologic era, just as we find it to-day among the tribes of Tasmania and Australia.[2] Edgar Quinet well says: "In this being, in whom I did not know if I was to find an equal or a slave of all other creatures, the instinct of immortality reveals itself in the midst of death. What a future I begin to discern for this strange animal, hardly knowing how to build for himself a hut better than a wild beast's lair, and yet concerning himself to provide an eternal home for his dead! I seem to be touching the first stone on which rests the edifice of things Divine and human. After such a beginning, all that remains is easy of belief."[3]

Upon this still heaving soil began the long history of the human soul seeking the true God. Amidst the shocks of convulsed nature, man made his first gropings after the supernatural. It seemed to come near to him in the form of maleficent spirits, which he must conjure

[1] Quatrefages, "Hommes fossiles," p. 130. [2] Ibid., p. 131.
[3] Edgar Quinet, "La Création."

first in life and supremely in death. Death itself, while it was a great mystery, did not seem to him the end. Prehistoric man tried to protect even in death the objects of his affection. His ignorance was profound; but the tenderness of his thought for those whom he had lost, is but the more touching because of the childish arts used to express it. This is still the attitude of a large portion of mankind, including the savage peoples of the Old and New World. Of this we have abundant documentary evidence, and we are able to realise with some precision, the social and religious status of the rude childhood of the world, for savage tribes are its living representatives among us. We must be cautious however in the conclusions we draw from mere travellers' tales. We must bear in mind that the tellers are often ill-informed, for the savage does not willingly confide to strangers his religious beliefs. It is also important that we should not affirm hastily that extreme degradation is always indicative of the high antiquity of any community, either social or religious. This would be to ignore the possibility of retrogression and decadence; but this possibility is often a realised fact among savage peoples, as we are told by the masters of ethnographical science.[1]

We must be careful neither to romance about the savage, as Rousseau does, nor to caricature him as do those who make him the connecting link between the man and the monkey. Without going further into this subject which opens a very wide field of literature,[2] and deals with many abstruse questions, we may briefly characterise this early and very important phase of the development of religion. Though it has been left behind for long ages in countries where the historic evolution has been carried on under favourable conditions of civilisation, as in Western Asia, it nevertheless formed the subsoil of that evolution which has struck its roots deep into it. Hence the importance

[1] Waitz, "Anthropologie der Natur-Völker," vol. ii., p. 68 et seq.

[2] Besides the work by Waitz already mentioned, we would refer the reader to Tylor's "Primitive Culture," and to Sir John Lubbock's "Origin of Civilisation." Also to M. Quatrefage's invaluable book, "Hommes fossiles et hommes sauvages," a repertory of all the latest scientific discoveries.

of understanding aright, this preliminary phase of religious development which we find still going on among the savage tribes of our own day. Unless we rightly apprehend the initial stage, the history of the religions of the ancient world will remain a riddle to us. We shall content ourselves with a general survey, supporting our argument by unquestioned facts in relation to savage nations, which have been ascertained and recorded by the ethnologists of our day.

If we could picture to ourselves the cave-man, especially in the Neolithic age, when he seems to have arrived at the full development possible in that geologic era, he would doubtless appear to us precisely like the savage of Oceania, Africa or North America. From a social point of view the identity is complete, except for a few external variations, the results of difference of soil and climate. We find the same flint tools and rude weapons, without any industry properly so called. There is the same primitive attempt at ornament, the same inadequate clothing. Food is mainly provided by the chase. There is seldom any attempt at cultivation of the soil, except under very favourable conditions. There is even less attempt at trading by barter among the inhabitants of islands not immediately adjacent, than there was among the troglodytes, in some of whose caves we find traces of provisions coming from very various sources. Family life exists only in its crudest form. The woman is either the slave of the man, doing all the work, or the sport of his wild passions. Of social organisation the only trace is the rod of command which the tribe obeys. How can we account for this long arrest of progress, under conditions infinitely more favourable than the era of geologic crises in which the troglodyte lived?

What have been the causes of this stagnation or retrogression? This is the secret which the ages past will for ever keep. Nevertheless, even socially considered, man never sinks so low as to lose all trace of his manhood and to stand on the same level as the beast. Even among the most degraded savages, we find tools, arrows, hunting knives, quaint attempts at adornment, a constant endeavour to embellish the real. Still more emphatically does

humanity assert itself in the domain of the feelings. The savage is undoubtedly cruel to his enemies, and indulges in sanguinary and abominable rites, but his affections express themselves sometimes with touching pathos and poetry.

Here and there we gather fragrant blooms in these bare and desolate places. What a fine cadence of mother-love we catch in this lament over a little dead child, uttered by a mother belonging to one of the most savage tribes of New Zealand:—

"Behold me brought low with sorrow! My heart-strings quiver for my little child. Oh, my friends, I am like a tree laid low upon the ground! I am bowed down like the long and supple fronds of the black fern, and am not able to lift up myself again because of my child. Where is he now? Oh, my child! who sprang so joyously into my arms whenever I said, Come to me, oh, my son!"[1]

If we pass on to religion, we have to acknowledge with Waitz that there is no spot upon earth where its influence is not felt.[2] Tylor, who can hardly be suspected of spiritualistic leanings, says distinctly: "So far as I can judge from the immense mass of accessible evidence, we have to admit that the belief in spiritual beings appears among all low races with whom we have attained to thoroughly intimate acquaintance."[3]

M. de Quatrefages considers religious sentiment to be the distinctive trait of humanity. He even goes so far as to say, that apart from this there is no essential difference between man and the brute creation. This is an exaggeration; for before man can rise to the religious sentiment, to the intuition of a higher life and of spiritual forces, he must possess faculties capable of grasping the general in the particular, that is to say he must possess the power of reasoning on the life of which he is conscious within himself.

Now the brute creation never attains to this. With this reservation, we admit that the religious sentiment

[1] Quatrefages, "Hommes fossiles," p. 456.
[2] Waitz, "Anthropologie der Natur-Völker," p. 171.
[3] "Primitive Culture," Tylor, vol. i., p. 384.

is the peculiar characteristic of man; it is part of his very being. It cannot therefore be regarded as a mere outward communication to him, simply a revelation from without. It is an intuitive and spontaneous development of his nature. He turns instinctively to the Divine as the magnet to the pole. It is idle to pretend, with the rationalist school of Bonald, that religion, like all other social truths, comes to us from without, through the primary revelation of language. The higher life would in that case be only a lesson learnt; but in order to learn that lesson, it must be understood, and in order to understand it, there must be a true affinity for it. Truth can only be grasped if there is a pre-established harmony between it and the soul of man. In this sense, we only truly learn that which we already know. If man were not a religious being by nature, he would never become religious. But because he is a religious being, we find traces of religion in his life everywhere and always, even under the least favourable conditions. We reject then absolutely, the traditional explanation of the origin of religions which would trace them back simply to some ancient tradition.

We do not deny that the primeval religion which man possessed in the mysterious phase of his being before he had separated himself from God, may have left its traces, and that among some privileged peoples these traces have been preserved with more distinctness than among the great mass of mankind, scattered to the four corners of the earth by enforced dispersion. We recognise in the most ignorant worship a vague acknowledgment of the Fall, a dim perception that life was once a better and a higher thing. But whatever value we may attach to these relics of a venerable tradition, we are bound to admit that the hearth upon which the sacred fire of religion ever burns, is the soul of man. The fire may smoulder long beneath a heap of ashes and dust, but in the end it will burst out in tongues of leaping flame.

We refuse then to admit that religion springs from the mere contemplation of nature, or from the action of natural forces, whether beneficial or baleful. Unless we give up the fundamental principle of reason which re-

quires for every effect an adequate cause, and argue that the less can produce the greater, we must admit that the mere contemplation of nature, even in its most surpassing grandeur, must fail to give any true intuition of the Divine, just as the ravages of the reaper Death can convey to us no conception of immortality. These grand truths spring up intuitively from the depths of man's moral being. Undoubtedly man does not at first manifest this religious intuition in its fulness and purity, for the simple reason that he is himself not conscious of it, and that it has been long obscured by parasitic overgrowths. It may be compared to the formative idea which Claude Bernard discerns even in the formless embryonic life, and without which that life would never develop into a definite being of a certain order.

The development of the religious life is like that of the natural. It is not produced by the mere evolution of latent forces. Action from without is needed to bring this development to its normal issue. So the *processus* of religion cannot be complete without the manifestation of God Himself; and as we have already observed, that manifestation in its adequate and supreme form can be nothing less than a positive revelation of Divine love in all its fulness. Even where the way has not been directly prepared for this supreme revelation—I mean by positive partial revelations—it is indirectly prepared by the very course of history under the directing hand of God, and yet more by the operation of that Divine Spirit which never ceases to strive with the spirit of man.

To revert to the religion of the savage. This is, as we have said, a part of his moral being, but it forms as yet only the dim environment of the sacred germ which is destined to live and grow. This germ is long exposed to noxious influences which impede its right development. But it is still there. Even when half stifled by noisome overgrowths it sends out now and again strong and living shoots. Hence even in the religion of savage nations, while we never find a pure monotheism, we yet find the monotheistic idea constantly recurring, and sometimes asserting itself with singular force in the midst of contradictions and obscuring errors. We only contend

for primitive monotheism in this restricted sense. We never pretend that at the base and root of all religions, whether of the ancient or the barbarous world, we have any evidence of the worship of one God reigning without a rival over the universe. On the contrary, God is constantly confounded with nature itself, or at least the two are so blended that it is hard to separate them, though as we shall see, they are never absolutely identified. The deity shares his power with a multitude of gods, some of whom are very nearly his equals. Nevertheless he keeps a pre-eminence which sometimes amounts to an unchallenged supremacy.

Among the Mexicans, the Tahitians, the Australians, the Dajaks of Borneo, the Zulus and the negroes of the Gold Coast, we find the worship of one supreme God. "From north to south of Africa," says Waitz, "the negroes adore one supreme God, in addition to their numberless fetishes." [1]

If then monotheism cannot be said to have existed in a pure form in one universal primitive religion, we yet find unmistakable traces of it in all places and throughout all times. In a word, the monotheistic intuition is inseparable from the conception of religion. The very word religion implies adoration of that which goes beyond the order of nature. The primary characteristic of the order of nature is limitation—the necessary result of its subdivision. The primary idea of the Divine is one of infinity, of supreme excellence, an intuition, so to speak, of the absolute. Hence this primary intuition shows a perpetual tendency to reappear and to free itself from all opposing elements, keeping unshaken, though often beclouded, its belief in one supreme and sovereign God.

This monotheistic intuition is always accompanied by faith in the persistence of the human personality after death. As this fact is universally admitted it need not be dwelt upon here. With these two fundamental notions is combined the moral intuition, the sense of moral obligation which is at the root of all human relations. Some idea of justice underlies the most rudimentary social

[1] Waitz, "Anthropologie," vol. ii., p. 168, *et seq.* See also Pressensé, "Study of Origins," p. 510.

constitution. We may go further and show that the moral idea has never been completely dissociated from the religious, but on the contrary the two have become more and more intimately united. The belief in some retribution after death is now admitted to be very general, even by ethnologists whom no one will suspect of a spiritual bias.[1] The sense of impurity and of the need of expiation are manifested in the most barbarous modes of worship. We admit that the atonement to which they have recourse is often as cruel as the wrath of the deity whom the worshippers seek to appease. There is a phase in which sacrifice is nothing more than food offered to the gods. But a higher idea soon manifests itself. Remorse comes in; the consciousness of guilt prompts the sacrifice, and the priest, who at first was regarded in the light of an enchanter, becomes a mediator between man and the deity.

For this reason the Tahitians require of their priests, a life of special purity and consecration. Hence we argue that the idea that some purification is necessary, must have been an element in man's religious intuition. Thus the wise and deep saying of Hartmann is verified: "Religion springs naturally from the dismay with which the heart of man regards evil and sin, and the desire it feels to account for their existence, and if possible to put an end to it."[2]

In a word, religion forms part of the higher life of man as man. At the lowest stage of savage life, it implies an intuition of the Divine, that is of the absolute; faith in immortality; the elements of morality, which are inseparable from the idea of God and of a future life; and lastly the bitter consciousness of a curse resting upon the world, and of pollution demanding atonement. We have a strong confirmation of the reality and intrinsic grandeur of this primitive religious sentiment, under the mass of superstitions and errors by which it is overgrown, in the significant fact, that the lowest savage is found capable of apprehending the purest religion—the religion of the gospel—when it is brought to him by missionaries.

[1] Girard de Rialhe, "Mythologie comparée," p. 115.
[2] Hartmann, "Les religions de l'avenir," Germer Baillière, 1876.

There could be no more decisive proof of the degree to which he possesses the religious faculty.

This elementary religion does not remain in the state of mere vague and inert instinct. It affects the whole course of history and all human affairs, by virtue of the faculty which man possesses of remembering and anticipating, and connecting the future with the past. The movement of religious history is directed by an inward logic, which brings out spontaneously the results of the premisses laid down. This purely natural dialectic is the law of reason. There is nothing fatalistic about it, for it may have its breaks; its sequence may be interrupted by new ideas, and new influences may be introduced. These in their turn become new premisses, the consequences of which are deduced by the mind of man and evolved in the course of history.

Here we must draw an important distinction. This historical development soon comes to an end among peoples who remain in the isolation of savage life, while it is continually advancing among civilised nations which come into frequent contact with other civilised peoples. Contact between different nations, even if it be brought about by means of war, is the most powerful stimulant to progress. The development of savage nations, though it goes such a little way, is particularly interesting because it helps us to understand the first beginnings of religion in its cradle in the ancient East. Indeed the beliefs of the old Chaldee closely resembled those of the savages of to-day, both in the Old and New World. We are thus enabled to study upon a large scale and in living characters, the first stages of the religious development among the nations of history. Ethnographical science, after proving that there was really a stone age, presenting the same characteristics all over the globe, has established on no less decisive evidence the essential identity of the various religions of savage nations, not only in their primary rudiments, but in their spontaneous development.[1]

[1] "Religions des peuples non civilisés," par M. Albert Réville (Paris, Fischbacher, 1883). "Les religions de Mexique, et de l'Afrique centrale," by the same (1885).

Throughout North and South America, in Oceania and Africa alike, the religious idea of savage nations goes through three stages—naturism, animism, and anthropomorphism. We do not mean that these are distinct and successive phases: as a rule they all co-exist. The lower stage, which forms the basis of the religious edifice, abides not as a mere memory of the past, but as a persistent influence or belief. This identity in the development of savage nations does not prevent great variety both in the symbolism used to express it, and in the part assigned to certain objects of worship. The diversity of the aspects of nature and the incidents of local history produce these differences, which moreover never go so far as to modify the nature of the religious development. This is always marked by the same three stages, at first successive, afterwards concurrent.

When man in his rude and uncultured state finds himself confronted with the vastness of nature, his first impression is of his own insignificance. He is dazzled by the splendour and overwhelmed by the resistless force of nature. He feels himself in the grasp of a mighty Power, which inspires him now with admiration, now with awe. He has no control whatever over it; he can neither understand nor utilise it. He has not even learnt how to cultivate the soil so as to energise its latent fruitfulness. The idea of the Divine, of the Absolute, which slumbers in the depths of his being, awakes in view of this awful majesty of nature. He feels the presence of God, and he lends an ideal grandeur to the natural by projecting upon it, in some sort, the vague notion of the infinite, the absolute, which is in him, though unconscious.

Thus naturism is the first form which the religious sentiment assumes. Let us not suppose however, that even in its first manifestation, the savage completely identifies the Divine with terrestrial and finite things; for these alone would never have suggested it to him. If he were left unaided, to spell out the book of nature, he would never read in it the name of God. It is because that name is written in characters however bedimmed on the depths of his own being, that he transfers it to the external world, in which he finds only partial and lower

manifestations of the Divine, however impressive they may be to him in that early stage, when sight is the great inlet of ideas, and reflection is almost as rapid as sensation.

The savage has nowhere stopped at what is called naturism. He has always supplemented it by animism or spiritism, which is a sort of primitive philosophy, the belief that there is a soul or spirit informing all the phenomena of nature.[1]

Beneath every manifestation of the outer world, small or great, he discerns a spirit, a soul answering to the spiritual part of man which inhabits his body. Herbert Spencer connects this primitive dualism with the dream of the hunter, who all through his heavy sleep fancies that he is carrying on his favourite occupation. He thus gets the idea of a second self, different from the form which lies sleeping in the hut, beneath its covering of skins. Looking at the shadow which he casts before him as he walks along, he is led to identify his second self with this shadow, and under this form he represents to himself his departed ancestor.[2] That the fact of the shadow cast by the body of the savage, has some relation to the ideas he has formed of his own twofold nature, we do not deny. But that the notion of a spirit distinct from the body, invested as we find it with a religious character, should have arisen out of so common an experience, we cannot admit.

In reference to this, as to naturism, we say the religious idea was innate in the man, and was only evolved, not originated, by the observation of outward facts. Thus the savage who, though he may wholly fail to grasp its higher functions, has yet become conscious that there is a spirit within him, distinct from his physical being, imagines that there is such a soul in all natural objects, from the star in the heavens to the beast that supplies him with food.

Stock and stone are to him alike informed with a living spirit. Every such spirit seems to him indued with a mysterious force capable of doing him service, but still

[1] See "Outlines of the History of Religion," C. P. Tiele, p. 19.
[2] Herbert Spencer, "Principles of Sociology."

more likely to do him harm, for pessimism always instinctively prevails. He feels himself under the spell of some mysterious malediction, which he vainly tries to shake off. Hence he does not remain passive in view of those numberless manifestations of the Divine which surround him with a circle of terror, though as we have seen, he still has the intuition of a higher divinity controlling all. The fetishes carved by the savage in wood or stone, are designed to protect him against the evil spirit.

Max Müller has shown by arguments which cannot be refuted, that fetishism has never been the simple adoration of the material object.[1]

Indeed there can be no adoration without a sense of the Divine, which must imply at least the recognition of some being greater than man. The fetish alone is but a poor fragment of the material world. In order to make it a god, it must be invested with some attribute not really possessed by it, but evolved from the inner consciousness of the worshipper. It is beyond question, moreover, that fetishism never exhausts the religion of any people however primitive. It is always associated with ideas and practices which imply the existence of other gods, and do not exclude that relative monotheism of which we have spoken. Nowhere does the true character of fetishism appear with more clearness than in the religion of the negroes of the Gold Coast.

In the first place, we find clearly marked in their religious beliefs, the connecting link between animism or spiritism and the doubling of the human personality, for they make the spirit of man a separate being, to which they give a name. It is called *Kla* during life, and *Sisi* after death. The negroes worship these spirit fetishes,

[1] "The word *fetish* (Portuguese *feitiço* corresponding to Latin *factitius*) is the recognised name for amulets and similar half sacred trinkets. The Portuguese sailors gave the name to the talismans of the savages, because they themselves used in the same way their rosaries, dauby images, wooden crosses, etc. . . . A negro was worshipping a tree supposed to be his fetish, with an offering of food, when some European asked whether he thought the tree could eat. The negro replied: 'Oh, the tree is not the fetish; the fetish is a spirit and invisible, but he has descended into the tree.'"—"Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion." Max Müller, Lecture 2.

which are the spirits of the air. They call them *Wongs*, and believe them to proceed from Nyongmo—their supreme god to whom they pray daily.[1]

Sometimes the fetish is an animal which becomes the particular god of the tribe, as in the totemism of the North American Indians. After a time, these animals come to be regarded as symbolic personifications of higher, and especially of sidereal divinities. In this character, they become objects of worship, and we shall find them occupying a place in religions of a much higher order.

The worship of the stars was at first a mere extension of fetishism—an idealised fetishism in this sense, that the stars were regarded as the highest manifestation or incorporation of the Divine, which was still essentially a spirit, the immaterial element enshrined in a sensible form. We must always bear this in mind when we study the great systems of sidereal worship. We observe in the first place, that fetishism applied to the sun and moon, must of necessity assume a character of peculiar grandeur. We can hardly conceive the profound impression which would be made by the vast expanse of heaven upon uncivilised man, whose simple life left him free to observe without interruption the phenomena of nature. The sun climbing the horizon in the freshness and purity of the dawn, and flooding the evening sky with the purple glories of its setting, would fill him with a rapture of delight. Not less impressive would be to him the solemn beauty of the moonlight spreading its veil of silver over the weary earth. This same sun he perceives to be the source of fruitfulness, decking the plain with its robe of flowers. Its rays can also be at times consuming flames of fire. Then the heavens are clothed with blackness, the thunder rolls, and the storm-wings carry desolation far and wide. It is easy to understand how the ideas of power and grandeur would connect themselves in the mind of the savage with the sidereal bodies, and especially with the sun upon which all the life of our planet depends.

It is in the nature of things that this symbolism should

[1] "Die Relig. der Neger," *Steinhäuser. Magazin für neueste Geschichte der evangelisch. Mission* (Basle, 1856).

culminate in anthropomorphism, of which it was indeed already the unconscious expression, for animism was but the transference of the dual life of man to material objects. The attributes proper to humanity were transferred to the sidereal gods. Especially were these deities supposed to be subject to that great law of the sexes in which the savage recognises the very law of life. Is it not one of the great motors of his being, awakening the deepest passions both of love and hate? This universal frensy of love, described by Lucretius in immortal verse, the savage feels in all its force without any refining influence. He apostrophises it in his gods whom he classes in couples. They will never teach him chastity, for it is from the sensual side of life that he most nearly approaches them. Some of them, however, he regards as tutelary divinities, intervening between him and the powers of evil. These are around him on every side, the agents of the great spirit which delights to torment him.

We must be careful not to exaggerate this primitive anthropomorphism. It is always strongly tinctured with naturism, which takes away from it all character of individuality. The moral idea enters very slightly into it, and is always enshrouded in the material. There is a long interval to be traversed between it and the Greek humanism, which disengages anthropomorphism altogether from mere naturism, and creates for itself gods with a real and definite personality, no longer the mere sport of the wild forces of nature.

The worship of ancestors must be clearly distinguished from this naturalistic anthropomorphism. It sprang out of the universal faith of savages in the persistence of the human personality beyond the present life. What a profound impression the death of the father of the family must have produced in the cabin of the savage. As they bent over the remains of the loved one who had been taken away with a stroke, his sons could not believe he had for ever vanished. The awful silence of death struck them as a sublime mystery. They could not realise that all was ended with him from whose lips but yesterday they heard the war cry, or in whose eyes they met the look of love. Convinced that this body now cold in

death, had contained a spirit that was distinct from itself, they followed it in imagination into the realm of shades. Even to the dead body they attributed a certain persistent vitality, to sustain which they surrounded it with its favourite food and familiar weapons. But the spirit hovered above the earth, and as they held it to be divine in its nature, they ascribed to it a peculiar power which inspired them at once with awe and trust. Hence the worship of ancestors, which played so large a part among the ancients, as M. Fustel de Coulanges has shown.[1] We recognise in this one of the most pathetic forms of the primitive religious instinct.

Such is in substance the religion of savage nations, which is a mere development of the beliefs of prehistoric man. Upon this common background, symbolism has assumed an endless diversity of forms, according to the incidents of climate and national life. We find the same primary elements in the rites of worship. The priesthood and sacrifice have passed through the same phases of development. Beginning with a sort of magical idea, they have risen gradually to a more or less conscious desire after purification and expiation. Idolatry was an advance upon pure fetishism in worship, for the Divine was for the first time separated from its material environment, and concentrated in a representation, the symbolic character of which became more and more pronounced.

We can follow this primitive religion through its whole development, not only among savage hordes, but in great nations, which existed for centuries outside the pale of civilisation and current history. This is remarkably the case with China until the reform of Confucius. In the primitive religion of the Celestial Empire, the whole world was assigned to spirits which were themselves closely identified with natural objects. These were subject to a supreme spirit residing in the heavens and sharing his authority with the spirit of the earth. The latter represented the feminine element in the pair of deities. Ancestors were invariably deified. Most of the temples were consecrated to them. The Emperor, as representing the

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, "La Cité Antique."

Spirit of heaven, was the high priest of this essentially lay-religion.[1]

We learn from the work of M. Albert Réville on the religions of Mexico, of Central America, and of Peru, what an advanced development may be attained under favourable circumstances by an animistic religion, even when left to itself. The Mexican empire succeeded in constituting a social state with a skilfully ordered hierarchy under the rule of a proud and harsh aristocracy. In Peru, the Incas assigned a real place to justice and humanity in the government. Among these two peoples, the great sidereal fetish gained the ascendant over all other fetishes, though these did not absolutely disappear.[2]

The worship of the sun, and of the moon his spouse, prevailed from one end to the other of these vast empires. The sun could not but be regarded as a living personality, when even fetishes of a lower order were invested with the attributes of man. But there was no true humanism in the conception; the sun was still a fierce and fearful power of nature to be worshipped with hecatombs of the slain. This cultus was indeed the most cruel of all. The worshippers believed that the victim, at the moment of his immolation, became identified with the cruel god to whom he was sacrificed. Hence they devoured the warm bleeding heart, that they might feed on the Divine. A third great god appears in the background of this terrible religion. This god, who symbolised at first the east wind, assumed the form of a serpent-bird. He seems to represent a better religion belonging to the past. Hence the hope is cherished that he will come back from the regions of the West, to which he has been relegated by the sun god. He is to be the deliverer of the coming ages. Thus this sanguinary religion was felt to be inadequate, and even its devotees were looking for some better way. It was given up moreover to the grossest idolatry.

In Peru we find a genuine theocracy. The Incas pretend to be the true descendants of the sun. Their religious

[1] "Outlines of the History of Religion," C. P. Tiele. Translated from the Dutch.

[2] Réville, "Religion de Mexique," pp. 44, 45.

beliefs are substantially the same as those of the Mexicans, but sacrifices of blood are with them the exception. The notion of the Deity is more human, as is indeed implied by the direct descent of the sovereign of the country from the sun. Confession is one of the rites of the Mexican religion. This indicates a feeling of guilt. The idea of retribution is also present, and in some measure connects the moral with the religious idea.[1] In Peru also, confession was practised. The priesthood was there better organised than in Mexico. A certain degree of purity was required of the priests. The virgin priestesses were dedicated to a chastity as absolute as that of Vestals. The idea of the survival of the dead, associated with the worship of ancestors, is found again in these two countries. The paramount duty of the Peruvian is submission to the Incas. These appear to have generally exercised a salutary and civilising influence. One of them truly expressed the sublime idea lying at the root of naturism, when he said to a priest: "There must needs be above our father, the sun, a greater and more powerful ruler, at whose behest he pursues his daily unresting round."[2]

In the religions of China and of South America we find the highest point which naturism can reach. In South America at least, there seems to have been an intuition of its insufficiency, and of the need for some further development. This development took place in countries where there was a fusion of great nations, and a true historic evolution was thus inaugurated. Let us suppose these elements of primitive naturism, merged in the broad and vivifying current of history, among races susceptible of civilisation, favoured in their geographical position, and connected with each other by easy ways of communication, real arteries for the circulation of ideas. Ideas will then no longer merely revolve in a circle, as in the great deserts of savage countries or in insular isolation. Under the new conditions, the religious evolution is free to go on. The elements composing the primitive religious beliefs, will form fresh combinations and arrive at conclusions at

[1] Réville, "Religion de Mexique," p. 333.
[2] Ibid., pp. 170, 185.

once bolder and more comprehensible. Thus the animism of the prehistoric races and of savage peoples, introduced into Chaldea, does not remain stationary. It goes on developing till it becomes Greek humanism. We propose to follow the phases of this history in Egypt and Phœnicia, and among the primitive Aryan races in Persia and India. We shall thus mark the successive stages of this great evolution, each one of them the result of a logical sequence.

We have already said that there are many pauses and retrogressions in the course of this long religious history of the ancient world. More than once the development seems to stop, and the old conceptions, which had apparently been outgrown, resume their sway for a time over the minds of men. This phenomenon is easily explained, if we remember that the aspiration after an unknown God, which is the constant spur to religious development, always reaches immeasurably beyond the temporary solutions found for it. When there has been any real progress in the religious conception, there comes a moment of repose, of satisfaction; but soon the inadequacy of the solution makes itself irresistibly evident. In its disappointment, the soul imagines that the past was better, and tries to return to its old belief in an idealised form. Thus we find Greek humanism reverting to the celebration of the mysteries of primitive naturism. These are, however, but passing retrogressions. Soon the process of development is resumed, and a fresh advance is made, which in its turn is left behind, till the advent of the day of full deliverance, that is of the full illumination of which humanity is capable.

The history of the religious development of the ancient world is like a great musical symphony. At first the dominant thought, or, to speak more accurately, the dominant feeling of the master, which is the fundamental theme of his work, vibrates full of power and sweetness in the midst of apparent confusion, wild sometimes as the roaring of a storm. For one moment it comes out distinctly, rising above the minor cadences and melting harmonies; but again and again it is lost, till at length it bursts forth in one triumphant pæan, like the song of

deliverance of a spirit long fettered by the lower forces of its nature, and now at length realising its enfranchisement. The sigh after the unknown God, so long inarticulately breathed, becomes, upon purified lips in the evening of the old world, a prevailing prayer which opens heaven and brings deliverance down.

CHAPTER II.

CHALDEO-ASSYRIAN RELIGION.

§ I.—Its Sources.[1]

CHALDEA offers the best field for tracing the development of religion when once it has come within the cycle of history and of civilisation.[2] We are certain that the earliest developments were everywhere identical; but in Chaldea the religious evolution presents, at its outset, the most striking analogy to the religion of savage nations which we have been describing.

We must carefully distinguish between different races and different periods, although the primitive type is preserved with singular persistence. The religious edifice has risen to larger proportions in course of time, but the

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[1] "Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient," by G. Maspero; "Chaldean Magic," F. Lenormant. "The Chaldean Account of Genesis," G. Smith; "Comparative History of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Religions," C. P. Tiele; "Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions," by the same; "History of Art in Chaldea and Assyria," G. Perrot and C. Chipiez; "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," E. Schrader; "History of Babylonia," G. Smith; "Notes on the Early History of Babylonia and Assyria," by the same.

[2] New light has been thrown upon the entire history of these countries by the great excavations of recent years. In 1846 Botta discovered the palace of Sargon under the ruins of Nineveh. Layard discovered Calah with its palaces and temples on the right bank of the Tigris. At Nineveh itself, he discovered the palace of Sennacherib, with its library chamber full of treasures, and the palace of Esarhaddon. The "Assyrian Discoveries," of G. Smith, brought to light the famous texts containing the accounts of the Creation and of the Deluge, which remind us of Genesis. The works of Rawlinson, of Oppert, and of Lenormant, have reproduced and translated most of the cuneiform inscriptions. (See also "Les ruines de Ninive, ou descriptions des palais détruits sur les bords du Tigre," by Léon Féer. Paris, 1864). In the Louvre and the British Museum the most remarkable results of these excavations are to be seen.

basis has remained the same. Hence the importance of forming a just idea of the primitive religion of Chaldea. The country described by this name only included a part of the great plain of Mesopotamia. The Persian Gulf bounded it on the south; the Tigris on the east. On the west it bordered on the Arabian desert; on the north it again met the Tigris, at the point where it separates Upper from Lower Mesopotamia. Lastly, it bordered on Assyria, over which it was to exert so great an influence, though for centuries it was only a subordinate province. The Euphrates and the Tigris are to these countries what the Nile is to Egypt. Rain is rare in this region. The sun shines in summer with an unmitigated splendour which parches up the ground. The winter is cold with little snow, therefore without damp. The fertilisation of the soil depends on the overflowing of the two rivers. Hence the climate is unwholesome, deadly miasma exhaling from the deposit of mud left when the water has subsided. The dwellers in such a region would instinctively have a peculiar dread of the noxious influences at work in nature around them, spreading death beneath their feet. The very breath exhaled from the marsh assumes the guise of a destroying spirit. Close by is the desert, from which comes the deadly blast of the sirocco.

Chaldea was originally occupied by two great races. The first was divided into two branches: the Accadians, inhabiting the mountainous districts; and the Sumirs, the dwellers on the plain. The second of these races, called Cushites, came from the foot of Ararat, or perhaps from the peninsula of Arabia. While its Semitic origin cannot be positively affirmed, it is certain that it had great affinities with the Semitic race.[1] There has been much discussion about the origin of the former race—the Accadian. It is impossible to determine exactly whence it came. Was it a branch of the Turanian race, with which it has certain affinities of language and of religious thought (accounted for possibly by the fact that it belonged to the same stage of culture), or did it come from Bactriana? The problem is not to be solved in the present state of

[1] Tiele, "Comparative History."

science.[1] We cannot, however, accept the idea that the Accadians may be identified with the Cushites. These, who were always the lords of Assyria, had no doubt become intermingled with their predecessors in Chaldea, long before they brought them into subjection; but it is a mistake to ignore all difference of race between them. One fact is decisive against such identification, namely, the retention of the Chaldean tongue as a dead language in the official sacred books of the country, with an Assyrian translation appended. The duality of language implies a duality of race.[2]

It is of the highest interest to be able to assure ourselves, from these incontestable records, what was the primitive religion of the Chaldeans in its Accadian form. Most important liturgical texts have been discovered among the shapeless ruins of ancient buried cities.

The history of the Chaldeo-Assyrians divides itself into three periods. In the first, we have the pure Accadian element developing the primitive type of the national religion, and setting its ineffaceable seal upon it, without any mythological accretions. In the second period it is different. The Cushite element asserts itself more and more strongly. There is still the worship of particular local deities, though the differences between them are simply nominal or formal. Little by little we find these secondary differences merged in one unified mythologic system, in which a preponderating part is assigned to astrologic or astronomic symbolism. The third period is Assyrian, presided over by the god Assur, and by the king of Assyria as his highest embodiment. In this period all the earlier beliefs are developed and systematised, but none of them are abandoned; for we find the Chaldean religion forming as it were the basement of all this imposing edifice.

[1] M. Lenormant confidently maintains the Turanian origin of the Accadians. "Chaldean Magic," c. xix.

[2] M. Halévy, in the "Journal Asiatique" (June, 1874), maintains the identity of the Accadians with the Cushites. Tiele's conclusions, which we have given, seem to us to observe the true limits of scientific certainty. (Tiele, "Comparative History.") The cuneiform writing from being ideographic soon became phonetic. The term cuneiform is descriptive of the manner in which the inscription was made on the stone, the characters being nail-headed or wedge shaped.

Before proceeding to give an outline of this religion in its successive phases, we will take a brief review of the traditions which carry us back as far as the Creation and the great crisis of the Asiatic Deluge. By a comparison of these traditions with the narrative in Genesis, we see that the two spring from a common source, but soon diverge in their religious conceptions; for while in Genesis we are raised to the purest monotheism, the Chaldean legend constantly descends to a naturalistic interpretation. In 1872 the Chaldean account of the Creation and of the Deluge, was discovered by Mr. G. Smith in the Library of Assurbanipal, upon fragments of clay tablets.[1]

"Of the curious myths connected with the Babylonian religion, there are several examples. . . . The account of the Creation is unfortunately too mutilated for translation. It appears to record, that when the gods in their assembly made the universe there was confusion, and the gods sent out the spirit of life. They then create the beast of the field, the animal of the field, and the reptile or creeping thing of the field, and fix in them the spirit of life. Next comes the creation of domestic animals and the creeping things of the city. There are in all, fourteen mutilated lines remaining of the inscription."[2]

As regards the Fall, the texts discovered by Mr. Smith allude to mere convulsions of nature, presented under the form of Titanic struggles between the primeval God and the great serpent, which is only chaos personified. A cylinder now in the British Museum, represents a man and woman by a tree, on one branch of which are two large fruits towards which they are stretching out their hands. Behind the woman appears a serpent. This is obviously the very symbolism of Genesis. The story of the Deluge has been reconstructed almost entire by means of the fragments of a national poem found in the library of Assurbanipal. The story is told by Xisuthrus the

[1] A translation is given in Smith's "Assyrian Discoveries." See M. Bonnet's learned treatise, "Les découvertes Assyriennes et le récit de la Genèse," Montauban, 1884. Berosus gives a third abridged version of the Deluge, taken from the sacred books of Babylon.

[2] "Assyrian Discoveries," G. Smith, p. 397.

Chaldean king. The gods tell him of the judgment which is coming, and the tablet reads as follows:—

COLUMN I.

21. "Make a ship after this. . . .
22. . . . . I destroy (?) the sinner and life. . . .
23. . . . . Cause to go in? the seed of life all of it to the midst of the ship.
24. The ship which thou shalt make
25. 600 (?) cubits shall be the measure of its length, and
26. 60 (?) cubits the amount of its breadth and height.
27. . . . . into the deep launch it."
28. I perceived and said to Hea my Lord:
29. "The shipmaking thou commandest me,
30. when I shall have made,
31. young and old will deride me."
32. Hea opened his mouth and spake and said to me his servant:
33. ". . . . thou shalt say unto them
34. . . . . he has turned from me and
35. . . . . fixed over me
36. . . . . like caves. . . .
37. . . . . above and below
38. . . . . closed the ship. . . .
39. . . . the flood which I will send to you,
40. I into it enter and the door of the ship turn.
41. "Into the midst of it thy grain, thy furniture and thy goods,
42. thy wealth, thy womenservants, thy female slaves, and the young men,
43. the beasts of the field, the animals of the field all, I will gather and
44. I will send to thee and they shall be enclosed in thy door."

Then follows the description of the building of the vessel, which was carefully overlaid with bitumen within and without, like Noah's ark, and the narrative goes on:—

COLUMN II.

25. "All I possessed the strength of it, all I possessed the strength of it silver,
26. all I possessed the strength of it gold,
27. all I possessed the strength of it, the seed of life, the whole,
28. I caused to go into the ship; all my maleservants, and my female servants,
29. the beast of the field, the animal of the field, the sons of the people all of them, I caused to go up.
30. A flood Shamas made and
31. he spake saying in the night: 'I will cause it to rain heavily,
32. enter to the middle of the ship and shut thy door.'

33. A flood he raised and
34. he spake saying in the night: 'I will cause it to rain (*or* it will rain) from heaven heavily.'
35. In the day I celebrated his festival
36. the day of his appointment? fear I had.
37. I entered to the midst of the ship and shut my door.
38. To close the ship to Buzur-sadirabi the boatman.
39. the palace I gave with its goods.

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40. The raging of a storm in the morning
41. arose, from the horizon of heaven extending and wide.
42. Vul in the midst of it thundered and
43. Nebo and Saru went in front,
44. the throne bearers went over mountains and plains,
45. the destroyer Nergal overturned,
46. Ninip went in front and cast down,
47. the spirits carried destruction,
48. in their glory they swept the earth;
49. of Vul the flood reached the heaven,
50. the bright earth to a waste was turned.

COLUMN III.

1. The surface of the earth like . . . . it swept,
2. it destroyed all life from the face of the earth, ...
3. the strong deluge over the people reached to heaven.
4. Brother saw not his brother, it did not spare the people. In heaven
5. the gods feared the tempest and
6. sought refuge; they ascended to the heaven of Anu.
7. The gods like dogs fixed in droves prostrate.
8. Spake Ishtar like a child,
9. uttered the great goddess her speech:
10. 'All to corruption are turned and
11. then I in the presence of the gods prophesied evil.
12. As I prophesied in the presence of the gods evil,
13. to evil were devoted all my people and I prophesied
14. thus: "I have begotten my people and
15. like the young fishes they fill the sea."'
16. The gods concerning the spirits were weeping with her,
17. the gods in seats, seated in lamentation,
18. covered were their lips for the coming evil.
19. Six days and nights
20. passed, the wind, deluge, and storm, overwhelmed.
21. On the seventh day in its course was calmed the storm, and all the deluge
22. which had destroyed like an earthquake,
23. quieted. The sea he caused to dry, and the wind and deluge ended.
24. I perceived the sea making a tossing

25. and the whole of mankind turned to corruption,
26. like reeds the corpses floated.
27. I opened the window, and the light broke over my face,
28. it passed. I sat down and wept;
29. over my face flowed my tears."

The incident of the sending out of the birds is not wanting:

38. "I sent forth a dove and it left. The dove went and turned, and
39. a resting place it did not find, and it returned.
40. I sent forth a swallow and it left. The swallow went and turned,
41. a resting place it did not find, and it returned.
42. I sent forth a raven and it left.
43. The raven went, and the corpses on the water it saw, and
44. it did eat, it swam, and wandered away, and did not return.
45. I sent the animals forth to the four winds, I poured out a libation.
46. I built an altar on the peak of the mountain,
47. by seven herbs I cut.
48. at the bottom of them I placed reeds, pines, and simgar.
49. The gods collected at its burning, the gods collected at its good burning;
50. the gods like flies over the sacrifice gathered."

The narrative concludes with a great contest among the gods. But the great god, when he

7. "Saw the ship went with anger filled to the gods and spirits:
8. 'Let not any one come out alive, let not a man be saved from the deep.'
9. Ninip his mouth opened and spake and said to the warrior Bel
10. 'Who then will be saved?' Hea the words understood.
11. and Hea knew all things.
12. Hea his mouth opened and spake and said to the warrior Bel:
13. 'Thou prince of the gods warrior,
14. when thou art angry a deluge thou makest.
15. The doer of sin did his sin, the doer of evil did his evil.
16. May the exalted not be broken, may the captive not be delivered.
17. Instead of thee making a deluge, may lions be increased and men be reduced;
18. instead of thee making a deluge, may leopards increase and men be reduced;
19. instead of thee making a deluge, may a famine happen and the country be destroyed;

20. instead of thee making a deluge, may pestilence increase and men be destroyed.
21. I did not peer into the judgment of the gods.
22. Adrahasis a dream they sent, and the judgment of the gods he heard.
23. When his judgment was accomplished, Bel went up to the midst of the ship.
24. He took my hand and raised me up,
25. he caused to raise and to bring my wife to my side;
26. he purified the country, he established in a covenant and took the people,
27. in the presence of Hasisadra and the people.
28. When Hasisadra and his wife, and the people, to be like the gods were carried away;
29. then dwelt Hasisadra in a remote place at the mouth of the rivers.
30. They took me and in a remote place at the mouth of the rivers they seated me."[1]

Notwithstanding the naturalistic colouring given by the Chaldean religion to these narratives, they are of the highest value, handing down to us as they do, a tradition of almost incalculable antiquity. Abraham brought it with him from Ur of the Chaldees. We know the monotheistic form which it assumes in Genesis.[2]

§ II.—The Phases of the Religious Evolution.

Let us pass rapidly under review the three periods of development of the Chaldeo-Assyrian religion, connecting them with the history properly so called. The two earlier periods need not be separated, since the second was only the complement of the first.[3]

As far back as any historical documents carry us, we find in Chaldea a population emerged from the savage state. The social relations are controlled by laws which extend

[1] "Assyrian Discoveries," G. Smith, pp. 185, 193.

[2] The analogy between the two traditions is admirably treated in Schrader's book, "The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament." It gives a detailed commentary on the texts. The version of Berosus is much manipulated.

[3] The principal authority is the wonderful collection in the Library at Nineveh, which is given in the "Collection of Cuneiform Inscriptions," by Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1866. It is a copy of the old Accadian texts, made in the seventh century B.C., by Assurbanipul, king of Assyria, with a translation appended.

their protection even to the slave, and there is a regular system of taxation. The rents of the land are determined either according to a fixed valuation, or according to the current produce. Family ties are very strong. To disown father or mother is a veritable crime. A son who had been guilty of it would be first shaved, then led through the streets of the city, and finally expelled from the home. The desertion of a child is punished with imprisonment. The husband and wife have not, however, equal rights. The wife is liable to be drowned for an offence which, in the case of the husband, entails only the penalty of a fine. The same punishment condones the ill-treatment of a slave by his master.[1] Imperfect as this system is, it still recognises to a certain extent, that right, not might, should rule. The time of the great monarchies has not yet come. It is a sort of feudal system under a number of chiefs, who are in reality petty kings.[2]

Religion itself is still animism and nothing more, but animism carried to its furthest limits, with an attempt at mythology and cosmology, which only needs to be extended and systematised to become a definite religion. This rudimentary religion is really the expression of terror and despair. Man feels himself surrounded on all sides by the power of evil, which pursues him with relentless malice. It lurks in the bowels of the earth; its poisonous breath rises through every fissure. It haunts the river banks, is borne on the wings of the wind, thunders in the storm, and like a subtle miasma creeps into his veins with deadly fever or chill. In accordance with the great idea of animism, this maleficent power works through a multitude of spirits or demons, who assume the most various forms.

This superstitious belief in demons comes out in all its terrors, in the great collection from the Library at Nineveh, given to the world by Sir Henry Rawlinson. In the first two books, he enumerates and describes the spirits of evil, while the third book is filled with invocations to the gods. There are numerous forms of exorcism intended to conjure the power of these demons, who people the deserts, the mountain tops, the sea, the

[1] François Lenormant, "Etudes Accadiennes," vol. iii., 3rd ed., p. 8.
[2] Ibid., p. 24.

marshes, and enter into the bodies of men to torment them.[1] Then comes the enumeration of all the plagues which this demoniacal power can let loose. Pestilence, madness, nightmare, sickness, and even involuntary celibacy, are all set down to it.[2] The black gulf out of which this awful power is always ready to leap forth, underlies all the ways of men. It runs along the bed of the Tigris and Euphrates, beneath the waves of the sea, and through the burning entrails of the mountains.[3] The demons go out into all lands. They make women barren; they chase the mother from her home, and drive her into the desert with her child. They stop the flight of the bird in the air, and drive the terrified swallow from her nest to wander wildly through space. Invisible hunters, they pursue and strike down the ox and the lamb. They go from house to house. No door can keep them out. They dry up the milk in the breast. Theirs is the voice of slander ruthlessly destroying the peace of man at home and abroad. Intruding even into high heaven, they are deaf to prayers and supplications. They are the adversaries of the Lord upon the earth; they labour to destroy the gods. They are emphatically *the enemies*.[4]

The dark world of demons has its own hierarchy. At its head are the seven evil spirits whose dwelling is in the ocean depths. Under these terrible leaders, the demon army spreads far and wide, and assumes all possible forms, from plagues and pestilences to phantoms and awful visions of the night.

Their accursed power is very vividly described in the following fragment from "Chaldean Magic."

"They are seven! they are seven!
in the depths of the ocean, they are seven!
in the brilliancy of the heavens, they are seven!
They proceed from the ocean depth, from the hidden retreat.
They are neither male nor female,
those which stretch themselves out like chains.
They have no spouse, they do not produce children;
they are strangers to benevolence;

[1] Lenormant, "Chaldean Magic."
[2] Ibid., chap. i.
[3] Ibid. [4] Ibid.

they listen neither to prayers nor wishes.
Vermin come forth from the mountain, enemies of the god Hea,
they are the agents of the vengeance of the gods,
raising up difficulties, obtaining power by violence.
The enemies! the enemies!
they are seven! they are seven! they are twice seven!
Spirit of the heavens may they be conjured!
Spirit of the earth may they be conjured!"[1]

The demons are sometimes localised. There is one demon for the head, one for the hair, one for each member of the body. These destructive powers must be withstood by every possible means. The first is the invocation of the beneficent gods, who are sometimes addressed together as in the formula "Spirit of the heavens, conjure it! Spirit of the earth, conjure it!"[2] This prayer for deliverance is a form of exorcism, a sacred formula, the efficacy of which is in proportion to the greatness of the name invoked. This importance attached to certain mystic words is a necessary consequence of animism. In this stage of his development, man sees a spirit in everything, and applies this simple belief to words. He supposes the word to enshrine the presence of a mysterious power. This power is from the gods, and is transfused into the sacred formula, peculiar efficacy being attached to the names of the higher deities. Hence every formula carrying with it an element of the Divine, has virtue to protect from evil. The converse is equally certain.

"A malicious imprecation acts upon man like a wicked demon,
the voice which curses has power over him,
the malicious imprecation is the spell (which produces) the disease of his head.
The malicious imprecation slaughters this man like a lamb;
his god oppresses him in his body:
his goddess creates anguish in him by a reciprocal influence;
the voice which curses, covers and loads him like a veil."[3]

Hence the necessity of a countercharm to be worked by holy words:

"The evil fate, by the command from the lips of Hea,
may it be destroyed like a plant,

[1] "Chaldean Magic," p. 18.
[2] Ibid., p. 3.
[3] Ibid., p. 64.

may it be divided into pieces like a fruit!
may it be torn and plucked up like a twig!
The evil fate, Spirit of the heavens, conjure it!
Spirit of the earth, conjure it!"[1]

Next to holy words, the best way of loosing the spell of the curse is to drive the cruel demon, the evil spirit, into some plastic representation of itself. Animism implies that it actually comes out of the man and goes into this other form. Hence, in order to exorcise the terrible demon of the plague "which has no hand, no foot, yet comes on man like a snare, which burns the country like fire, spreads over the plain like a chain; like an enemy takes man captive; burns man like a flame; binds the invalid like a bundle"; a symbolic image of it must be fashioned and applied to the living flesh of the sick man.[2] In order to complete the cure, it is well to reproduce also the image of the good gods and to place it in front of the house. This is the explanation of the "great winged bulls" which flanked the entrance gates of the palaces at Nineveh, and were looked upon as genii keeping watch and ward.

The talisman, a sort of sacred object which is also endued with divine virtue, plays an important part in the exorcism of demons. It is only necessary to place long bands of white or black stuff upon the head, or hand, or foot, or whatever part is affected, in order to expel the demon, phantom, spectre, vampire, and to break the spell, for in this way the divine power is brought face to face with the power of evil.[3] The talisman, the forms of which are very various, is an impassable barrier placed between the god and the demons. It is like a snare in which the evil one is taken. "He who crosses the boundary (of property) the talisman of the gods, boundary of heaven and earth, will never let him go again."[4] These elaborate rites of exorcism needed many to take part in them. According to the book of magic, the exorcists were ranged in three categories—conjurors, physicians, and the theo-

[1] "Chaldean Magic," p. 65.
[2] Ibid., pp. 50, 51.
[3] Ibid., pp. 44, 45.
[4] Ibid.

sophists or priests. For a long time the practice of magic was an important function of the Chaldean priests.

So far we have only adverted to the animistic elements of the ancient religion of Chaldea. The higher elements were not wanting and these were developed by a true mythological evolution. The country, though not exceptionally favoured like some other regions, had its beauty and grandeur. The soil rewarded in the end the pains bestowed upon it; and it helped to stimulate the activity of its inhabitants by the heavy demands it made upon their patience. The fruitfulness of the earth, and still more the sublimity of the starry heavens rarely veiled by clouds, spoke to them of a propitious deity. Heaven, earth, and even the depths beneath (which belonged only in part to the powers of evil), were all in turn deified by the Chaldeans.

The image under which the universe appeared to them was that of a round skiff turned over. The earth formed its upper convex surface. The concavity beneath is the terrestrial abyss, the abode of spirits and of the dead. Above the earth extends the sky with its constellations of fixed stars; above again are the planets "revolving round the mountains of the East; the column which joined the heavens and the earth and served as an axis to the celestial vault." [1] Between earth and heaven is the zone of winds and storms. Each of these zones has its god. *Anna* dwells in the highest heaven; *Hea* upon earth; *Mulge*, in the lower deep. Hea represents especially the humid element which surrounds and fertilises the earth; hence it appears under the form of a fish. This is the *Oannes* of Berosus. By the elementary anthropomorphism which characterises every stage of religious development, each male god has his wife, a sort of feminine hypostasis of his attributes. The wife of Hea is *Damkina; Ningelal* is the feminine form of Mulge, the analogue of the Assyrian goddess *Belit*. The personality of these goddesses is left altogether undefined and vague. They are not so much persons at all, as cosmical powers deified in their beneficent attributes. The god of the highest heaven remains wrapped in impenetrable shadow. It is impossible to

[1] "Chaldean Magic," pp. 151, 152.

form any distinct idea of him. After these more or less abstract divinities, the sun and moon are the objects of worship. In like manner, the winds and waves are invoked, because, like the prow of the vessel, they force their way in the teeth of opposing fate. Fire occupies a place of high honour in this rude religion. It is invoked as the great agent in dissipating spells, the hero who puts the demons to flight. He (or rather it), is frequently called *Bilgi*, which must be translated as "the fire of the rushes," the fire issuing from an instrument analogous to the *arani* of the primitive Aryas, which was made out of a ligneous reed. A hymn says:

"Fire, supreme chief rising high in the country!
Hero, son of the Ocean rising high in the country!
Fire, with thy pure and brilliant flame,
Thou bringest light into the dwellings of darkness,
Thou decidest the fate of everything which has a name."[1]

These gods, so dimly personified, fight against the demons which are led by the seven spirits of the deep. This contest no doubt represents the great battle between light and darkness, which we find in all Oriental religions. In character it is rather cosmical than moral. It is less prominent in the Chaldean than in later religions. Anthropomorphism is as yet too shadowy to lend much colour to the contest between the gods and the demons. In truth it is not so much the active succour, the positive intervention of the gods which their worshippers desire, as some magic arts by which to break the spells of the demons. The great secret of deliverance and victory is the power to pronounce the ineffable name of the god, which no man can hear. The god of the earth is alone able to obtain this revelation and impart this benefit. "The highest, the most irresistible of all the powers dwells in the divine and mysterious name, 'the supreme name' with which Hea is acquainted. Before this name everything bows in heaven and in earth and in Hades. The gods themselves are enthralled by this name, and render it obedience."[2] Here we trace that vague monotheistic intuition which is indeed a universal element

[1] "Chaldean Magic," pp. 184, 185.
[2] Ibid., p. 42.

of religion, but is at first too slight to leave its impress upon it.

The overwhelming sense of the impassable barrier which separates man from the mightiest of the gods, prompts the desire to find a mediator nearer to himself than Hea. We have already seen sun, moon, and fire invoked in this capacity. A god, whose nature it is somewhat difficult to understand—Silik-mulu-khi—that is "he who distributes good amongst men," seems to have assumed this benevolent office. On the one hand he receives by revelation from Hea the secret which has power to ensure the defeat of the demons; on the other hand he carries to Hea the appeal of men tormented by malignant spirits and diseases. He is called the "hero amongst the gods, the eldest son of Hea, the merciful one, the generator who brings back the dead to life." "He commands the sea and it becomes calm." He commands the girdle of the river of Sippara (the Euphrates) and overturns its course.[1] This he does as a personification of the wind; but he was far the most human of all the Accadian gods. He is a sort of anticipation of the Persian Mithra—the deliverer.

After Anna and Hea, we have named among the gods Mulge, the god of the lower abyss, where warrior gods under his direction combat demons, monsters and plagues. Mulge himself is at once a terrible and a glorious god. He is the lord of "the country whence none return, the home which one may enter but none can leave, the road from which there is no return, the dwelling where those entering find blindness instead of light; where the multitude has nothing but dust to appease its hunger, nothing but mud for food, where they see no light and dwell in darkness, where shades, as birds, press towards the vault, where dust thickens upon the door and its wings."[2]

Nevertheless a hymn addressed to Silik-mulu-khi, the god mediator, attributes to him the power of bringing back the dead to life. Another prayer asks him to strengthem the hands of the dwellers in the realm of shades. Lastly, in one hymn a goddess of the night is represented as pro-

[1] "Chaldean Magic," pp. 192, 193.
[2] Ibid., p. 165.

nouncing judgment. Here we have a vague intimation of retribution, which becomes more distinct in later times.

Prayer occupies the foremost place in this worship. Sacrifice is also mentioned, but there is nothing moral or elevated about it. It presents food to the gods, who pounce upon the offering "like flies upon meat." No doubt these are the inferior gods. There is nothing more meritorious than to pour out the blood of victims like water. The idea that it is doing honour to the gods to resemble them, applied to the divinities which produce life, led in the end to the rites of sacred prostitution practised at Babylon; but its influence was felt in a much earlier stage, for we find from very ancient texts, that it was regarded as the greatest misfortune for a female slave not to have attracted the attention of her master.[1]

Such, as we gather, was the Chaldean or Accadian religion in its primitive form.

It is impossible to determine exactly when it was that it assumed a wider range under the dominant influence of the Cushite tribes, branches of the great Semitic race, which became blended with the early inhabitants of the country, and rapidly swarmed first over Babylon and then over Assyria. It is certain that no fundamental change was made in the religion through this influx of strangers; but Chaldea passed through a period of subdivision during which the same gods took different names in each of the towns which served as centres to these petty kingdoms or principalities. When the Chaldeo-Babylonian Empire was founded, it had to find a place in its pantheon for all these gods who were worshipped under so many separate names. Thus the mythological circle was widened.

Two other causes beside political unification combined to give it its final character. First of all, the priesthood had acquired great importance, as the caste of the Brahmans subsequently did in India. Just as the Brahmans turned to their own account the religion of the Vedas, so the Chaldean magicians made the primitive worship of the country minister to their authority. In the second place, a very marked feature of this period is

[1] "Chaldean Magic," p. 385.

the importance attached to the observation of the stars, which was soon raised from mere astrological superstition to the science of astronomy. The habit of reading man's destiny in the heavens and deciphering its secrets in the movements of the planets, was a great advance on the sorceries of the earlier priesthood. The sidereal aspect began to predominate also in the conception of the gods. This did not tend to make them more human. Indeed it must be admitted that anthropomorphism received a check.

We give now a brief summary of the mythological system of the Chaldeo-Babylonian religion, grafted upon the original element of naturism, as we gather it from the cuneiform inscriptions. The fundamental idea of this system is really that of divine unity in the pantheistic sense. The hidden god who comprehends all things in himself, manifests himself through the diversity of phenomena. The secondary gods who form a graduated scale below him, are but personifications of his attributes. They are primarily, as we have said, planetary gods. The god *par excellence* is *Ilu*. Babylon is his city, *the city of Ilu*. Next to this supreme god we have the first triad produced by emanation. It consists of the three following gods :—

Anu, the primordial chaos;
Bel, the demiurgus;
Nuah, the saviour, the intelligent guide.

To these three male gods correspond three feminine divinities :—

Anata;
Belit;
Davkina.

The second triad is composed thus :—

Sin, the moon god;
Samas, the sun god;
Bin, the god of the atmosphere.[1]

Then come the planetary gods :—

Ninip, Saturn;
Marduk, Jupiter;

[1] The name of this god is disputed; it has been maintained that his name was *Ramanu*, the Thunderer.

Nergal, Mars;
Istar, Venus;
Nebo, Mercury.

The twelve great gods preside over the twelve months of the year. Below them are a multitude of inferior gods, angels, genii, and the whole troop of demons, who perpetuate the ancient sorcery and incantations.

In reality, we find in this new mythological cycle the same religious idea as among the early Chaldeans, with the addition of the sidereal element. We have the same supreme deity wrapped in mystery, only he is called *Ilu* instead of *Anna*. The first triad gives us the three gods corresponding to the three regions of the universe. *Marduk* now takes the place of *Silik-Mulu-khi*, the god-mediator.

The feminine element however occupies a larger place in the new pantheon. *Anata*, *Belit*, and above all *Istar*, represent it in its fertility and voluptuousness. This explains why prostitution was made obligatory upon every woman as a rite in the temple of Babylon. In the legend of *Istar* we have a rough outline of the myth of Adonis. She also loses her husband and goes in search of him in the realms of the dead. This is the image of nature, coming forth after the sterility and death of winter, to seek again her brilliant progeny.[1]

§ III.—The Assyrian Religion.

Assyria, when it absorbed Babylonia and founded its vast empire, changed nothing but a name in the Chaldean pantheon. It raised its god Assur to the dignity of the supreme god, but without making any essential modification in the character of that deity. It gave him

[1] The recent excavations of M. de Sarzec at Tello, have given us a glimpse of the degree of development at which the small principalities of the country of the Sumirs had arrived before the formation of the great monarchies. M. Ledrain, Professor of Assyrian epigraphy in the school of the Louvre, gives a very interesting review of the social and moral status of this tiny kingdom. According to a cylinder discovered by an Englishman in Mesopotamia (a cylinder dating from the sixth century before our era), the reigns of Sargon I. and of Naramsin ought to be placed as far back as the year 3750 before our era. Now on comparing the archaic inscription on a vase of Naramsin with that of a

moreover a brilliant impersonation upon earth in its conquering king. Here history comes in as an important factor in the religious development.

We shall not dwell upon the mythical part of this history, which will concern us only in relation to its influence upon religion. We have seen Chaldea divided into various small kingdoms. Their chief cities were Uz, Nipur, with its gigantic temple, Sippara, Borsippa, Larsa, and lastly Babylon, destined long to maintain an independent dynasty. The country, after having been conquered by the Elamites 2300 B.C., and ruled over by a Median dynasty, finally became part of the dominion of Assyria. The Assyrians extended their conquests far and wide. They built splendid cities like Nineveh, Calah, Ellasar. After their king, Tuklat-abal-asar, had conquered Babylon (1100 B.C.) the Assyrian empire entered upon a prolonged period of wars and conquests. Under such kings as Assur-nazir-pal and Shalmaneser III., its victorious armies spread over a large part of Western Asia, from the Persian Gulf to Elam and the Red Sea. They occupied both Media and Armenia. After many vicissitudes of fortune, Assyria entered again in the seventh and eighth centuries B.C. upon a period of conquest and glory under the dynasty of the Sargons. At this time it took possession of Egypt. The period of decline commences with the elevation of the Medes under Cyaxares. In alliance with the kings of Babylon, who were always ripe for revolt, the Medes dealt a mortal blow at the Assyrian colossus. The ruin of Nineveh in 606 produced an immense effect. Finally, after many reverses, old Chaldea under Nebuchadnezzar once more regained the sceptre of the Asiatic world, and

vase in the Sarzec collection in the Louvre, especially as to the designation of the word *king*, we find that the vase brought from Tello is of earlier date than that of Naramsin. We are thus carried back to more than four thousand years before Christ, as the date of the little kingdom of Tello. Judging from the inscription in the Sarzec collection, it must have reached a fairly advanced degree of civilisation. Architecture is shown to have been in a high state of development, by the style of the temples, especially those built in the reign of king Gudea. The religion is obviously just what it was throughout this whole region, before the foundation of the great monarchies. (See "Revue politique et littéraire," January 12th, 1883.)

held it until the time when, under the leadership of Cyrus, Persia appeared upon the scene and a new period of history began.

These great wars of the Assyrian conquerors have left few traces except upon the monuments in their capital cities. From these monuments we get some idea of this proud and cruel race of kings, who delighted to immortalise through the sculptor's chisel, not only the pomp of their victories but the agonies of their victims on the battle and on the hunting field. These terrible kings pass before us in the obscurity of the dim past, like comets scattering death and dismay in their train. The work of destruction only ceases in one place to begin in another. There are always fresh realms to conquer, new revolts to quell. It is a deluge of blood which sweeps all before it, and leaves behind only a barren tract of desolation. That which stands out in strong relief upon this lurid background, is the image of the king, the representative of the gods and worshipped as their equal. It is extraordinary how these kings exalt themselves in the inscriptions which record their exploits. Never did human pride use more daring language or more audaciously claim equality with God. In a genuine inscription Tuklat-abal-asar thus expresses himself: "I filled the mountain defiles with the corpses of my enemies. I cut off their heads. I overthrew the walls of their cities. I took slaves, booty, treasures without number. Six thousand of them embraced my knees and I made them prisoners. I swept like a tempest over the bodies of the fighting men in the mountain passes, for I am the mighty king, the destroyer of the wicked, he who slays the hosts of the opposers."[1]

Another inscription runs thus:—"The god Assur my lord, commanded me to march. I disposed my chariot and my armies. I cut to pieces my enemies and pursued them as wild beasts. I carried off their gods; I gave their cities to the flames; I made them heaps of ruins. I laid upon them the heavy yoke of my dominion, and in their presence I gave thanks to god Assur, my lord.[2]"

[1] Maspero, "Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient," p. 296.
[2] Ibid., p. 437.

In another inscription relating to the conquest of Elam, the Assyrian king boasts of having entered by the will of Assur and Istar into the city of Susa, and proudly reposed in its palaces. "I took away all their gods," he says, "and all their goddesses, their gorgeous apparel, their treasures, their priests. I carried all away to the land of Assur. I broke the winged lions and the bulls which kept guard over the temple. The high places of their kings who had not feared Assur and Istar, I burned under the sun."

The king in using this language was the true representative of his people, who were intoxicated with his triumphs and gorged with booty taken from the enemy. The splendid palaces raised in the king's honour were the temples of this proud race of monarchs, of whom the god Assur was the august type. This worship of the conquering kings became a religion, symbolising the victorious strife of the national gods with the powers of evil. We thus get an important addition to the placid sidereal pantheon of the Chaldeans, though the new element is only a superstructure upon the old basis of naturalism.

The moral development of a nation has not been fully described when its official religion has been characterised in its various phases. The soul of man always cherishes aspirations higher that its national worship, so long at least as this is in an early stage. Hence we find these ancient nations constantly getting beyond their own worship, expanding and purifying it, and projecting upon their gods some of the inner light which has its source deep in their own being. Thus by flashes they discerned a king higher than him whom they worshipped, and their various gods would be for a moment transfigured, but only to fall back again into the darkness. The cry of conscience went up nevertheless to the true God whom it was feeling and seeking after, through all those lower impersonations of the Divine which might seem to satisfy the soul in the ordinary course of life. The great inward prophecy has never been without an oracle. Of this we have abundant proof in the Chaldeo-Assyrian religion.

In the first place, we find moral qualities attributed to

the gods which do not belong to their official character. The highest intuitions of the Divine in the heart of man are embodied in their changing forms. Thus after fire has been represented as the "pure and brilliant flame which brings light into the dwelling of darkness," as the force which "mixes copper and steel and purifies gold and silver," it is abruptly spoken of as "striking terror into the heart of the wicked." "May the works of the man, son of his god, shine with purity! May he be high as heaven! May he be pure and holy as the earth! May he shine as the midst of heaven!" So we read in a mutilated fragment.[1]

In another hymn the moon-god assumes the same moral aspect. It is no longer regarded as a mere force of nature, but acts as a god living and abiding. When the seven evil spirits of the abyss have raised tempests and gales of wind, when they have darkened the face of the lord of heaven, who looks forth in anguish through the shrouded sky, when they themselves have burst upon the earth like a torrent, the moon-god fights against them victoriously till "the king, son of his god, like the light of Aku (the god of the moon) causes the country to live again; like the brilliancy of the flame he raises his head."[2]

The humanity of the sun-god is more emphasised than that of the moon-god. He shines in the highest region of the heavens, dissipating the darkness, and is one of the most active protecting gods, a great enemy of demons and sorcerers. The hymn addressed to him runs thus: "O thou who causest lies to disappear, thou who dissipatest the bad influence of wonders, of auguries, of evil prognostications, of dreams, of wicked apparitions, thou who defeatest wicked plots. . . . do not allow those who cast spells and are hardened to rise. . . . May the great gods who have created me, take my hand! Thou, who curest my face, direct my hand, direct it, lord, light of the universe, sun."[3]

What a sublime vision the unknown poet of old Chaldea must have had of his god, when he saw him radiant

[1] "Chaldean Magic," p. 185.
[2] Ibid., pp. 204, 209.
[3] Ibid., pp. 178-9.

through the portals of heaven, the archangels bowing low before him, while the earth beheld him with rapture. From the height of heaven he rules the children of men, shedding down upon them a ray of peace, and healing their sufferings.[1]

The divine sun brings deliverance from sufferings more intense than those which assail the body. One of the hymns in which he is addressed closes with these words, in which we notice the confusion of moral with material ideas so characteristic of the Chaldean religion. The priest is invoking help for a sufferer:

"The man, son of his god, is burdened with the load of his omissions and transgressions.
His feet and his hands suffer cruelly; he is painfully exhausted by the disease.
Sun, at the raising of my hands, come at the call, *eat his food, absorb his victim*, turn his weakness into strength.
By thy order may his omissions be forgiven! may his transgressions be blotted out!
Break his chains! may he recover from his illness!"[2]

In spite of confusion and error there is however much beauty in these hymns of adoration. Sometimes prayer assumes the form of a dialogue between the man and his god, as in this invocation addressed to Silik-mulu-khi, the god-mediator.

The worshipper.

"Who can escape thy hail?
Thy will is the sublime scimitar with which thou rulest heaven and earth."

The god.

"I commanded the sea, and the sea became calm.
I commanded the flower, and the flower ripened its grain.
I commanded the girdle of the river of Sippara, and I overturned its course."

The worshipper.

"Lord, thou art sublime, what transitory being is equal to thee?
Silik-mulu-khi amongst all the gods who are named thou art the remunerator."[3]

There is a clear acknowledgment of sin in the hymn we have already quoted. It ultimately finds sublime expression in veritable psalms of penitence. The fragments referring to the creation and the deluge, tainted as they are with

[1] "Chaldean Magic," p. 180. [2] Ibid., p. 181. [3] Ibid., p. 192.

naturism, still bear traces of a dim yet distinct memory of a decadence of the human race, or at least they look upon wrong done by man as the cause of the worst scourges that desolate the world. The story of creation contains these words: "All which had been planned by the great gods *was excellent.*" The deluge is distinctly ascribed to the sins of men for whom the great god Hea claims the pity of Bel the god of justice. "Let the sinner expiate his sins," says Hea to Bel, "the malefactor his crimes, but be thou propitious to him, have pity on him that he be not destroyed."[1]

The Chaldean penitent is especially concerned about his own sin, as the following quotations show:

"Lord, let the fierce anger of thy heart be appeased!
Let the god whom I know not, be pacified towards me!
Let the god who knows the unknown be pacified!
Let the mother-goddess who knows the unknown be appeased!
I eat the bread of thine anger,
I drink the waters of anguish.
I feed, without knowing it, on transgression against my god.
I walk without knowing it, in shortcoming towards my mother-goddess,
Lord, my faults are very great!
Very great are my sins!
Oh God, who knowest the enemy, very great are my faults!
I err, not knowing it.
The strength of the anger of the Lord is kindled against me!
I am cast down and there is none to stretch out a hand to me.
I go weeping and none takes me by the hand.
I cry and there is none to hear.
I am worn out and languishing and there is none to deliver.
I draw near to God who shows mercy, and I pour forth bitter lamentations. Lord, be favourable to me!
How long, O my god?
How long, O mother-goddess?
How long, O God who knowest the unknown?
How long will thy heart be full of anger?
No man knows whether he has blasphemed or done piously;
Lord, thou wilt not thrust away thy servant into the midst of the tempestuous waters, come to his help,
Take his hand!
I commit sin. Turn it into piety.
I make mistakes; let the wind carry them away.
My blasphemies are many,
Tear thou them in pieces like a veil!

[1] Bonnet, "Les découvertes Assyriennes," p. 96.

O my god, my sins are seven times seven—take away my sins.
Mother goddess, forgive my sins,
Let thy heart be appeased like the heart of a mother who has born a child.
Thy child is full of lamentations; his heart is torn with sorrow
He mourns in silence like the turtle-dove,
He has implored like a child, the mercy of his own god."

These lamentations conclude with the hope of deliverance.

"Be appeased, I have implored thee.
If thou dost receive me favourably,
If thou dost grant thy protecting favour to man, he lives again,
Ruler of all things and of all men, thou merciful deity who dost restore,
Thou dost receive our lamentations." [1]

We catch the same accents of penitential sorrow in the following fragments:—

"O God my creator,
Hold up my arms,
Guide the breath of my mouth,
Guide my hands.
O Lord of light,
Lord, leave not thy servant to fall.
In the waters of the roaring torrent,
Hold thou my hands.
Lord, my transgressions are many,
Great are my sins.
The Lord in his wrath has laid his wrath upon me.
The Lord in the severity of his heart has laid his hand upon me.
Istar has fallen upon me, she hath put me to grief.
I fall to the earth, and there is none to lift me up.
He who fears not his god, shall be bowed down like the reed.
He who does not revere Istar, his strength shall fail,
Like the star in the heaven, he shall fade away,
He will be driven away like the waves and the clouds,"

Thus did the great voice of conscience make itself heard in a land still devoted to naturalistic worship and in bondage to superstitious terrors. It was impossible that this development of conscience should not be accompanied by at least some vague intuition of retribution in a future life.

The Chaldean religion granted a place of privilege in

[1] Lenormant, "Études Accadiennes," vol. iii., 3rd edit., pp. 150, 159 183.

the abode of the dēad to brave soldiers. It was in Assyria that the conception of the future life took a new development. The most important document on this subject is the mythological narrative of the descent of Istar into Hades.

The brave repose in the abode of the dead, surrounded by their relations and refreshed with the pure water of life. It is said to the just: "Drink pure water in pure vessels." The goddess Anata has transported them to a place of holiness where flow honey and fatness. A bronze tablet recently discovered by M. Clermont-Ganneau, seems to mark a new stage in the idea of retribution connected with the future life. The lower region is occupied by two fearful monsters which represent avenging tormentors, while above, upon the earth, a dead man is placed between two protecting gods. There is therefore a recourse to the gods to escape the sorrows of Hades.

Strange to say there is not a trace of burial in Assyria. Chaldea seems to have been the necropolis of the whole empire. The Chaldean tomb is a little vault built of bricks. Sometimes it is replaced by jars of baked earth covered with great mounds. These accumulated graves formed in the end enormous mounds.

Chaldeo-Assyrian art is the faithful expression of a religion of terror and of that passion for conquest so brilliantly personified in the kings. The buildings composing the royal palaces were of brick, and were grouped upon a platform shaped like a T. Each of the two parts of this platform was a rectangle.[1]

They were the temples of the deified kings. They were reared upon artificial mounds, which served as pedestals. In order to relieve the monotony of so flat a country as Chaldea, staged towers were introduced. "The whole structure terminated in a chapel placed on the central axis of the tower, and surmounted by a cupola. The inscriptions mention the dome covered with leaves of chiselled gold which crowned at Babylon that temple 'to the foundations of the earth,' which was restored

[1] Perrot et Chipiez, "Chaldean and Assyrian Art," p. 13.

by Nebuchadnezzar.[1] The use of brick made the construction of the dome easy. The decorations could not be a part of the building itself as in Egypt, where stone was chiefly used. In Chaldeo-Assyrian art, the ornamentation was chiefly in fresco with metal plaques and glazed polychromatic bricks."[2]

All the temples are built on the same plan. "They consist of rectangular prisms placed one upon the other, and gradually diminishing in size. At a distance this gives a pyramidal appearance to the mass of which they form a part, but their walls are vertical."[3]

In Assyrian sculpture demons are represented by figures of repulsive ugliness. Animal and human forms are constantly blended. In many colossal sculptures, the body and legs are those of a bull, the symbol of strength; the mane of a lion floats around the figure of a man with eagle's wings. We never find one simple religious type. Chaldean art is always characterised by a bizarre religious symbolism. It is otherwise with the sculptures designed for the palaces. These are uniformly of a narrative character. "The sculptor was, in a way, the editor of the military bulletins," says M. Perrot; "his work was the newspaper of the day, explaining the political events of his time to those who could understand no other writing."[4] The scenes of the chase and of the battlefield, and the cruelties inflicted by the victors upon the captives, are depicted in startling relief. The animals are better rendered than the human form. Assyrian art is as a whole essentially monotonous, its one idea being to represent terror and force.

Such is this religion which never rises above its starting point, and is in its essence just the animism of savage nations. It is a religion of terror leading to the display of fierce warlike violence, and yet we find running through it purer and higher ideas—the prophetic intuition of a protecting deity of justice, who has pardon for sins confessed. It is not however by these brief flashes of the light of conscience that we can judge of the moral develop-

[1] Perrot et Chipiez, "Chaldean and Assyrian Art," vol. i., p. 379.
[2] Ibid., p. 372. [3] Ibid., p. 397. [4] Ibid., vol. ii., p. 103

ment of a race, but by the prevailing tone of its ideas. Hence it is certain that among the Chaldeo-Assyrians, religion never rose to anything beyond sidereal naturism, slightly coloured by anthropomorphism, and that they always attached the highest importance to the magic arts designed to exorcise the demoniacal power abroad in the world.

The better elements of this religion were its acknowledgment of its own insufficiency, its touching lament over the incapacity of its gods to give light or to satisfy its yearning, and lastly its plaintive cry to "a god whom it knew not," as says one of its sacred songs.

CHAPTER III.

THE RELIGION OF EGYPT.[1]

IN tracing the religious evolution in Egypt, we are carried back into an antiquity almost as remote as that of Chaldea. We find here also the same basis of animism which still exists among savage nations. Only it is not perpetuated and systematised as in the Chaldeo-Assyrian religion, where it had the honour to survive primitive barbarism and to hold its own in the midst of an advanced state of civilisation. In Egypt it became quickly transformed by a new interpretation which connected it with the national religion under its ultimate form. It still lived on however, almost unchanged, in popular superstition.

Egypt had a very important influence on the general development of religion in the Asiatic East, being constantly brought into contact with it by the rude shock of war, in which the peoples were brayed together as by a pestle in a mortar.

Egypt comprises the valley of the Nile from the first cataract to the sea. It is, as Herodotus justly describes it, "the gift of the Nile."[2] "It forms a band of vegetation athwart the desert, an elongated oasis on the banks of the river from which it derives the moisture needed for vege-

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[1] G. Maspero, "Histoire ancienne des peoples de l'Orient."
C. P. Tiele, "Comparative History of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Religions."
By the same. "Outlines of the History of Religion to the Spread of the Universal Religions."
F. Lenormant, "Manual of the Ancient History of the East."
"Le Livre des Morts." Traduction par Paul Pierret.
Paul Pierret, "Le panthéon Egyptien.'
Dunker, "Geschichte der Alterthums."

[2] Herodotus, lib. ii., c. v.

tation. Its fertility depends entirely on the regular overflowing of the Nile, which deposits a fertilising slime over the parched lands of the waste howling wilderness."[1] Before the rising of the Nile, at the time when its waters are lowest, shortly before the summer solstice, the country presents the most sterile appearance possible. It looks like a region burnt with fire. The contrast is marvellous when the river has spread its healing waters over the land. "All nature shouts for joy," says a witness of this brilliant and universal revival. "The men, the children, the buffaloes gambol in its refreshing waters; the broad waves sparkle, shoals of fish and fowl of every wing flutter over them in clouds. The air is literally alive with insects innumerable."[2] In a word, above, beneath, around, it is the sudden and complete triumph of life over death.

It must not be forgotten that this phenomenon of the overflow of the Nile recurs with almost absolute regularity. The same regularity characterises the aspect of the heavens. The blue of the sky is never clouded, the sun shines in right royal splendour. Nothing is more rare in Egypt than the coming up of a sudden storm. The light is never shrouded till evening, when the sun goes down in the purple west, in a glory which is the promise of recurring brightness on the morrow. No sharp snow-peak rises to break the uniformity of the plain, which is bounded by the desert and finally loses itself in the sand. Egypt presents an aspect of calm immensity, where everything has a character of serene fixedness, where the universal struggle between the powers of life and death in nature, is carried on as in a well regulated drama, without sudden catastrophe. Its river and its sun constitute its glory and its fruitfulness. Hence it is never weary of extolling them. We shall find all the mythology of Egypt connected with solar myths. "Hail, O Nile," we read in one of the most ancient hymns, "O thou who dost manifest thyself upon this earth, and who comest in peace to give life to Egypt. Thou hidden god, irrigator of the fruitful land, creator of the sun. Thou dost water the whole earth, thou

[1] Maspero, "Histoire ancienne des peuples de l'Orient," p. 1.
[2] Osburn, "The Monumental History of Egypt," vol. i., p. 13.

creator of the corn. When thou arisest, the earth is filled with mirth. Thou dost drink the tears from all eyes, and scatterest the abundance of thy goodness."[1]

The flora of Egypt is not very varied, but with its lotus and papyrus it covers the earth with a brilliant robe. The palm-tree rises majestically. The cow and the ox fill an important place, as in all agricultural countries. The sparrowhawk, the eagle, and the ibis fly in the light air, and the banks of the river are rendered dangerous by the crocodile and the hippopotomus. The fauna of Egypt entered largely into the animal symbolism of the national religion. The nature of the soil did not allow of idleness, while at the same time it did not overtax the energy of the husbandman. The necessity for taking advantage of the short season favourable for cultivation, and of never neglecting the construction of canals for the water, demanded great public works. It was imperative to have at command a vast pacific army, and this favoured the formation of a great centralised and monarchical state. This system was well adapted, by the concentration of national forces under one powerful hand, to facilitate a policy of conquest.

Such was the land of Egypt. It derived its name from one of its principal gods.[2] The race which inhabited it at the remote period when it first appeared in history was not indigenous. It had been preceded by a black race which it had driven off the field. It has been wrongly supposed to be of Ethiopian origin.

Both the character of the language and the physical type of the Egyptian indicate an Asiatic parentage. He belongs to the proto-Semitic race, possibly he may even be connected with the more ancient race whence sprang the Aryans and Semites.[3] Asia was always to the Egyptians the holy land, the country of the gods. They came probably by the isthmus of Suez, and established themselves first between the Delta and the cataracts. If we compare the figures upon the ancient monu-

[1] Maspero, "Hymne au Nil," Paris, 1868.
[2] "House of the Worship of Ptah."
[3] Maspero, "Histoire ancienne," p. 17; Tiele, "Comparative History," pp. 17–19.

ments with the fellahs of to-day, we shall observe that the physical type has not changed. It partakes of the fixity which is the general characteristic of the country. Tall and thin, the Egyptian is of a grave physiognomy in which gentleness is blended with sadness. Over his lips there passes a sad smile which has a touch of resignation in it. The whole aspect of the Egyptian expresses calm reflection, an acceptance of the immutable order of things, without any attempt to change it. The pre-historic period must have lasted for many centuries. Doubtless a patriarchal system of government prevailed, with an animistic religion, in which the stars and the fertilising river were the principal manifestations of the divine.

From the time when Egypt begins to have a history, we find it divided into small principalities, composed of one or more towns with small territories attached. These were called *nomes*, and were ultimately absorbed in one great monarchy. The social organisation has already its hierarchy. The king shares his authority with the high priest. He receives the taxes, directs public works, and provides for the defence of the land. The nomes still existed in the state of subordinate sovereignties when the great kingdom of Egypt was constituted. The capital of the country was first Memphis, then Thebes, then Tanis. Each of these centres had its particular gods, which were in reality only different manifestations of one and the same religious conception. Just as royalty preserved its own character, though one dynasty succeeded another, so religion underwent no real change, though the names of the gods were altered. All these sovereign gods were brought together at last in a sort of national Pantheon. We shall see how at first each represented one particular aspect of the same elementary deity; but subsequently they all became confounded with one another.

We shall only touch on the history of Egypt properly so-called, in so far as it contributes to the evolution of the religious idea. All that we know of its highest antiquity is through mythic story. The Egyptians regarded their early kings, those who had raised them out of a life

of barbarism, as gods, come down to earth to teach them. There is a vague tradition that at this remote period the priestly caste had a certain predominance. The first really historic period is the Memphite, in which king Menes built Memphis and made it the true capital, and even this epoch is much obscured by legend. It comprehends ten dynasties. Great temples were built in honour of Ptah, the worship of the gods was duly appointed, and the march of conquest began. Art, which was at first very rude and never rose above the roughest outlines, received a real impetus at the close of this period under the reign of Cheops (Suphis), Chephrenes and Mencheres, as is shown by the erection of the pyramids of Ghizeh, and of the great Sphynx.

The Memphite period lasted for nineteen centuries.

After repeated revolts under the eleventh dynasty, Thebes took the place of Memphis as the political and religious capital of the country. To this dynasty Egypt owed the sinking of the Lake Mœris, and the erection of the vast royal necropolis known as the *Labyrinth.* Abyssinia and Nubia were conquered. It was during the Theban period, that the terrible invasion of shepherds belonging to the Canaanitish race took place. They formed the fourteenth dynasty. When they had been vanquished and expelled, the new Theban empire began with the sixteenth dynasty. Then the great Egyptian conquests in Asia commenced. Syria fell almost entirely under the dominion of Egypt.

The great sanctuaries of Thebes and Karnak belong to this period. The reign of the great Sesostris (Rameses II.) was one succession of victorious wars, the most famous of which was provoked by the coalition of the Syrian peoples. When Sesostris had assured by his arms the preponderance of Egypt, he devoted himself to the arts of peace and multiplied his vast buildings. There is not a ruin in Egypt or Nubia which does not bear his name. It was he who completed the temple of Luxor at Thebes. He did not neglect works of public utility, and built several cities. Poetry was much cultivated during his reign. The "Book of the Dead" belongs for the most part to the Theban period. This was the golden age of

Egypt. Immediately on the death of Sesostris, the unity of the empire was threatened by a succession of *fainéant* kings. It needed the genius of Rameses III., head of the twentieth dynasty, to establish it in its glory by his triumphant wars. This restoration however did not last long. Thebes lost its pre-eminence, and the twenty-first dynasty, which had been preceded by a sacerdotal revolution, fixed its seat at Tanis in the Delta (700 B.C.). The ruling power was divided among the cities of the Delta: Tanis, Bubastis and Sais. Syria shook off the yoke of Egypt, and Egypt itself came under the influence of the Greek spirit, through the numerous mercenaries enrolled in its armies. Invaded by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, Egypt was in its turn compelled to submit to the domination of the foreigner.

The Ptolemies, after the conquest of Persia by Alexander, assured the predominance of the genius of Greece, without however subverting the national religion, which was too closely identified with the race.

Civilisation had reached a very advanced state in Egypt. The various grades of society were distinctly marked, but there was no rigid system of caste. At the head was the king, the representative of the deity. His power was administered in the nomes by governors. There was a great administrative system embracing the whole country and controlling the revenues. Admission to these government offices was by examination. The priesthood was not exclusively a religious body; magistrates were taken from among the priests. The civil law was for the most part equitable, and punishment was in proportion to the crime. Its execution was presided over by the goddess of justice, the daughter of Ra. The people were absolutely at the disposal of the king, who enrolled them in his armies, which were augmented by large numbers of mercenaries, and compelled them at will either to fight his battles or to assist in the great public works by which the country was covered with temples and palaces. The military organisation was altogether feudal, every landed proprietor furnishing his contingent. The life of the great Egyptian lords, as we find it reproduced on the mural paintings of the tombs, was sumptuous and splen-

did. Literature, properly so-called, was less cultivated in Egypt than the plastic arts. Hieroglyphic writing has not at all the mysterious character that has often been assigned to it. The Egyptian hieroglyph is not a symbolic sign of ideas, as was long believed; it represents sounds either alphabetic or syllabic. Only the ideographic signs are known to be symbols. The cursive writing was a mere modification or abbreviation of the hieroglyphs.

§ I.—First Phase of the Religious Development of Egypt.

Egypt had its religious as well as its civil capitals. They were successively Memphis, Thebes, Sais, and each corresponded to a particular period of religious development, though the essence remained the same. The religion of Egypt preserved to the last, as we have said, a latent element of primitive naturism brought from Asia by the first invaders of the country, but it never, like the Chaldeo-Assyrian religion, made this an indestructible part of its mythology. It greatly modified it at a very early stage, but the popular preference still clung to it. It must be admitted also that at no stage of its religious development did Egypt free itself from the fundamental error of naturism, which consists in confounding nature with the deity under various names. Egypt never learned to lift the heavy folds of the many-coloured veil of nature, and to pass through it into the sanctuary of the God who is a spirit. But unlike the sombre and melancholy Chaldee, the Egyptian did not live under a reign of terror, or people the world, as the Chaldeans did, with a host of evil genii. His imagination was not haunted to the same degree with unseen demons.

This was because the Egyptian lived in a fertile land under sunny skies. The river of Egypt did not (like the Euphrates) gender death; nor was it the haunt of the seven evil spirits of the deep, accursed leaders of the hosts of evil. The Nile was, so to speak, the nursing father of the whole country. Yet it had its season of sterility, when its aspect became stern and terrible. Hence terror was not altogether banished from this religion, generally

so serene. We shall see the powers of evil playing an important part in the later mythology. At first the Egyptians tried to exorcise them by the means in use among primitive nations. Diseases were looked upon as possessions by evil spirits, and magic arts were tried to break the spell. We find a survival of these early superstitions, though much modified by higher conceptions of religion, in the use of amulets. These were supposed to strengthen the beneficent influence of the terrestrial manifestations of the sidereal god, who was the favourite deity of the populace. The Egyptians imagined the legendary incidents of the contest of Osiris with the powers of evil to be of ill omen. Hence the anniversary of his momentary defeat was an accursed day.[1] It was necessary on that day to avoid going near the banks of the river, or the unwary man would be sure to fall in and become a prey to the crocodiles. The Nile thus became on these ill-fated days another Euphrates, the haunt of the spirits of the deep, personified by the cruel-jawed monsters.[2]

It was especially the animist phase of primitive naturism which was perpetuated in Egypt, not only in the popular superstitions, but also in the prevailing idea of religion. To the Egyptians every natural phenomenon, every living thing, had its spirit-double, as is shown in all their legends. Was not this the meaning of the conflict, now victorious, now the reverse, of which the sun was the hero? The myth of Osiris was grafted upon the sidereal animism of earlier times, and coloured with the partial anthropomorphism which we find amongst the very lowest savages. The idea of animism had been suggested to man by the experimental discovery he had made of the complexity of his own being. He was conscious in himself of a double being. We shall find this idea of the double playing an important part in the later anthropology and theology of Egypt. The application of animism to the animal creation, so common in the first stage of religious development, was carried to an extraordinary length in Egypt. The animal was to the Egyptian a living fetish, a powerful manifestation of the deity before

[1] Maspero, "Papyrus Harris," p. 28. Paris, 1879.
[2] Ibid., p. 43.

it became his most expressive symbol. Even in the best days of the national religion, when to the more thoughtful, the animal had ceased to be anything more than the symbol of deity, the common people simply worshipped the sacred beasts and birds. We find a significant illustration of early animism in the importance attached in worship to sacred formulas, the holy words which, according to the religion of Egypt, never ceased to exercise a real power both over the great gods and the spirits of evil. The "Book of the Dead" is the special monument of this fundamental belief. Each of its prayers is preceded or terminated by the assertion that he who shall duly recite it shall be saved, and shall come off conqueror in the great conflict beyond the grave. Evidently the Egyptian, like the whole ancient world from its dim beginnings, holds that sacred words are powerful because they contain a divine force, a spirit.

According to a similar and no less ancient belief, the little figures placed in the tombs were regarded as helpers of the dead man, and the food laid within his reach was thought to retain its nutritive virtue. In all this there is the same idea—that there is an invisible spiritual energy pervading the natural or corporeal form. Subsequently the Egyptian carried this idea to its extreme issues, ascribing a sort of real existence to the mural paintings on the tombs in which the events of the previous life were depicted.

To what extent the monotheistic intuition which underlies the most elementary religious ideas, was consciously present in this prehistoric period, it is impossible to say. It is nevertheless probable that it developed here more rapidly than elsewhere, since monotheism was affirmed much more emphatically in Egypt than among Asiatic nations. It was still very imperfect, however, for it was rather the totality of being which was ascribed to the supreme god, than sovereignty over all life. We are persuaded that there has been much exaggeration about the purity of Egyptian monothism, both in its obscure beginnings and in the time of its fuller development. This does not imply that we do not recognise a very real distinction between the great Egyptian god and the sun.

A mere sidereal deity would not have said to the sun, "Come to me." The great Egyptian god controls and guides the stars as well as the earth.

It is equally certain that the idea of unity predominates over that of multiplicity, and that we have not to deal with a vulgar polytheism. Only this divine unity comprehends the whole world in itself as the whole comprehends the parts. Egyptian monotheism is strongly tinctured with pantheism, as is always the case where the intuition of the moral consciousness, which alone witnesses to a god distinct from and ruler over the world, does not occupy the first place in the system. But this moral consciousness did victoriously assert itself in ancient Egypt, and made more than one breach in that Chinese wall of universal naturism, which would fain imprison man within the terrestial and the finite. It seems sometimes to form a religion of its own within the national religion, elevating the moral intuition above the pantheistic idea. We shall see how far Egypt carried this happy inconsistency which we trace throughout the pagan world.[1]

§ II.—The Root Ideas of the Religion of Egypt after Prehistoric Times.

While primitive animism is maintained almost in its integrity in the Assyrio-Chaldean religion, it undergoes very important changes in Egypt, from the commencement of the historic evolution. The great gods of Chaldea are in fact only magnified impersonations of good and

[1] M. Pierret, in his learned work entitled "Le panthéon Egyptien" (Paris, 1882), lays great stress on this development of monotheism. The many passages which he quotes, fail however to establish anything more than a monotheism strongly tinctured with pantheism. This they constantly affirm, as is clear from the following passage cited by M. Pierret: "The sacred unity engenders the gods and assumes various forms, but itself remains unknown" ("Book of the Dead," p. 102). "The substance of the gods is the very body of God" (Ibid.). M. Pierret repeatedly admits that the supreme god is identified with the lower gods, especially the sidereal gods, and that he sometimes passes from the first to the second rank, as when he is identified with the divine scribe of the gods (p. 26). The explanation is that monotheistic pantheism perpetually drifts into the multiplication of gods. The divine exists in each separate part as in the whole.

evil spirits; they very rarely intervene by positive acts in human history. They are essentially cosmic forces which are to be made propitious to man by means of incantations. They are practically identified with the stars, which would appear, from the development given to astrology, to have been very important factors in human affairs. These heavenly bodies give a permanent local habitation to the divine power, which exerts its influence rather by a mechanical carrying out of certain fixed laws, than by destined acts prompted by any motive.

In Egypt it is otherwise. The drama of natural life, so impressive in its recurrence, is translated to the sphere of the divine, which is not separated by any sharp line of demarcation from the earthly life. The Egyptian god is himself the great champion of the conflict with the power of evil, which enwraps the world in its death-shroud. Religion thus becomes a much more practical thing, and cannot be reduced to a mere series of rites and formulas. It also has its battle to fight. We must not disguise from ourselves, however, that there is little perception as yet of the true moral life, of which we only get brief flashes. The history of the gods is not indeed a real history, for it is all governed by immutable natural laws. The conflict is only apparent; its various phases succeed each other by the same law of necessity, which governs the change of the seasons and the flow and ebb of the Nile.

The power of evil is from its very nature adverse to man, as winter is cold, and night dark. Its temporary triumph is as inevitable as the succession of the seasons. The victory of the god of light is equally certain to come in its turn. We are in a world governed by pantheistic fatalism. Yet there is real progress in this dramatic symbolism. It prepares the way for, or at any rate it foreshadows, the true moral conflict in which the sovereignty of the will is fully recognised. So truly is this the case that the Egyptian religion concludes by making the drama of the natural life the symbol of the drama of the moral life, which after being begun on this side the grave, is carried on and completed beyond the reach of fatalism, in the mysterious regions of the after life. Thus was wrought, or more truly, thus was begun

a mighty moral evolution, in spite of the pantheistic naturism which still characterised the religion of Egypt.

Between these two opposing currents the religious conscience of Egypt drifted backwards and forwards, and it would be idle to look for logical consistency amidst such conflicting influences.

In our account of the Egyptian theodicy we shall only dwell on fundamental points, on what may be regarded as the root ideas of the religion of Egypt, which retained its distinctive features in spite of all local diversities and political changes. There were dynasties of gods as there were dynasties of kings, subject to change of time and place; but the notion of the divinity, like the institution of royalty, underwent no change. The ideas are substantially the same under the new empire as under the old, whether the capital is Memphis or Thebes. Only the names, or rather the secondary attributes, are changed, according as one manifestation or another of the solar divinity predominates in the religious conception. The sun-god is called Ra at Heliopolis, Osiris at Abydos, Ptah at Memphis, until Memphis becomes the capital of the ancient empire, when he becomes confounded with Osiris.

Amun, the great god of Thebes, is not to be clearly distinguished from Khem throughout the period of the middle empire. His supremacy is more clearly affirmed under the new empire. He is then confounded with Ra the supreme sun-god, and thus becomes Amun-Ra. He is thus at once the hidden invisible god, and the god manifested in the dazzling light of day. But whether the supreme god is called Osiris, Ra, Ptah or Anubis, he is always one and the same, and his cosmical development goes on by the same evolution with its three invariable degrees. We find the same divine triad, the same conflict between the good and bad elements, the same final triumph, and the same relation between humanity and divinity. Egypt has always maintained this persistent identity of her theodicy, which changes only in its successive appellations, frequently uniting all its gods under one single denomination. Its policy was the same as that of Rome. It had its pantheon, constructed not of

stone, but of sacred syllables, which gave it a far higher value than the most costly sanctuaries, in a country where sacred words were supposed to have supreme efficacy.[1]

Let us now try to present in a few words the leading features of this theodicy. Beneath the waters of the primeval ocean called Nuh, which signifies "the primordial water," "the abyss," the hidden god, who is also called the supreme god, came into being. He is at once father and mother, unceasingly producing universal life, and he lives also in his son, who is no other than himself. This forms the great divine triad. The father is called Ptah at Memphis, Amun at Thebes, Osiris at Abydos. The mother is Sekhet at Memphis, Isis at Abydos, where she is always united to her sister Nephthys, who resembles her in every respect. Lastly, she is called Maut at Thebes. The son is called Imhotep or Horus at Memphis, and Khensu at Thebes. These names are definitely retained. They get frequently mixed up in course of time, as is clear from this passage of Iamblichus. "The demiurgic intellect, who is the curator of truth and wisdom, descending into generation, and leading the power of occult reasons into light, is called in the Egyptian tongue, Amun; but in consequence of perfecting all things with veracity and artificially he is called Phtha. So far also as he is effective of good, he is called Osiris, and he has other appellations through other powers and energies."[2]

This hidden god, the world-Father, is in reality the Absolute Being from whom all existence proceeds. He is the only One who has essential life, the only One who really creates, the only generator in heaven and earth, the father of fathers, the mother of mothers, the creator of all beings, the ruler of all things, who gives birth to the gods and gives form to himself. He has created his members which become gods.[3] Deep darkness is round

[1] See chaps. v., vi., vii., viii., in Tiele's "Comparative History of Religions," for a very learned discussion of these variations in the theodicy of Egypt, and their correspondence with the various phases of Egyptian history.

[2] Iamblichus, "De Mysteriis," sect. viii., chap. iii.

[3] "Livre des Morts," chap. 17, l. 3, 4.

about him. His nest is not seen. He is the creative soul of the celestial abyss; the maker of his own abode;[1] he is the only one in the "primordial water."[2] The "Book of the Dead" discerns the hidden sun-god in all the great gods of the Egyptian Pantheon.

> "I am Tum (the hidden sun-god), a being who is one alone;
> I am Ra in his first supremacy,
> I am the great god, the self-existing;
> The creator of his name, the lord of all gods,
> Whom none among the gods upholds.
> I was yesterday; I know the to-morrow."[3]

The identity of the gods of the triad comes out clearly in the saying: "The becoming of Osiris is the birth of Horus. Osiris lives again in him."[4] It is not only Horus the Deliverer whom this First Cause of all things holds within the depths of his being, it is also the evil element—Set, who represents evil, under the form of a sinuous serpent, in this drama of universal life, into which we perforce return as soon as we leave the frozen regions of metaphysical abstraction. "I am Osiris, the lord of the west," we read in the "Book of the Dead." "The perfection of being is in me. No-Being is in me. Among the gods I am Set, the not-Being."[5]

Here we have that fatalistic pantheism which lies at the basis of the religion of Egypt, and which should logically have excluded every moral idea. If it did not do so, it was because it was impossible for a young and powerful race full of the love of life, to confine itself to this region of abstract metaphysics. These purely intellectual entities got warmed and vivified, so to speak, in the fervent shining of its sun, which had already been worshipped in the childhood of the race, when sensation predominated over reflection. Egypt returned in part to its primitive intuitions, but it brought to them a degree of intelligence which prevented its falling back into mere sidereal naturalism. In fact, however large the part

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 85, l. 9.
[2] Ibid., c. 17, l. 3.
[3] Tiele's "Comparative Religion," p. 28.
[4] "Book of the Dead," c. 78, l. 13, 14.
[5] Ibid., c. 8, l. 1, 2, 3.

assigned to the sun in its mythology, it was never confounded with the supreme divinity. The sun was only one of his manifestations, one of his members, for as we have seen in a passage from the "Book of the Dead" already quoted, Amun and Osiris create their own members which are gods. These gods, indefinite in number, detract nothing from the greatness and mysterious sublimity of the supreme and hidden god; but they introduce conflict into the religious life. While only intended to represent the supreme god, they yet fill up the whole foreground, and are so identified with his beneficent operations that they are sometimes called by his names. Is not the powerful Benefactor who spreads the healing waters over the thirsty land, and brings back the sun out of the chambers of the dark, called Ra or Osiris? In his essence undoubtedly he is still the mysterious incomprehensible Being; but that which he effects through his divine members, which are part of himself, concerns man much more than the mystery of his essence.

Two causes especially contributed to attach a growing importance to these sensible manifestations of the deity. On the one hand, there was, as we have said, the aspect of the struggle for existence in a land like Egypt, where if only a drought prevailed through the failure of the periodical overflow of the river, desolation and death spread far and wide. On the other hand there was the strong intuition of immortality, the absorbing preoccupation with the future, characteristic of the race. Hence a mythology, at first purely naturalistic, went on developing and becoming more and more spiritual, till it embraced the highest moral ideas.

After creating the gods, his own members, the hidden and divine Principle of all things formed the world. He said to the sun, "Come to me," and the sun began to shine. He formed the earth and divided the waters into two great masses—the depths of ocean beneath and the firmament of waters above. Then appeared the evil spirit personified in the serpent Apap or Apophis, called also Set, with whom the beneficent gods were bound to wage perpetual warfare, though he also was an emanation

from the Divine Absolute. He really represented the devouring, scorching flame of the sun. This conflict was carried on both on earth and in heaven. To the Egyptian, Egypt was the world. To him, therefore, the victory of good over evil was symbolised by the recurring overflow of the Nile, on which the prosperity of the country depended.

According to Herodotus and Plutarch, the myth of Osiris meant nothing more than this. It simply represented the alternating seasons of drought and flood. The drought was Osiris made a victim by Typhon—the symbolic personification of the sun. His resurrection after the victory of his son Horus over Typhon, symbolised the return of the life-giving waters.[1] This interpretation of the myth, in which there is evidently a confusion with that of the Phrygian Adonis, is much too narrow. The cessation of drought, as the result of the overflow of the Nile, was undoubtedly attributed to the beneficent deity; but his victorious conflict with darkness has a far wider significance, in Egyptian mythology, than the mere fertilising action of the river, even without any reference to the deliverance wrought by him in the realm of the dead. Herodotus himself does not ignore this, for he makes Orisis reign in the abode of shades. The mind of the Egyptians was much impressed by the setting of the sun and the vanishing of the light, even before they discerned in it the most glorious of symbols. As they had not yet risen to the idea of the fixity of natural law, every return of the sun after its setting, seemed to them a new triumph of the beneficent deity.

The glory of his manifestation and victory over darkness, inspired the noblest poetry of Egypt, though it was always somewhat crippled by its sacerdotal and liturgical character. In the favourite figures employed in this poetry, we recognise the two characteristic traits of the Egyptians, love for their river and delight in sunshine. The luminous track in which Osiris moves under the form of the sun, is like another Nile-flood in the heavens. He

[1] Herodotus, "Hist.," ii. 49.

navigates it in a celestial bark of which he manages the sails. Horus is in the prow of the boat, sweeping the horizon with his glance. A number of inferior gods circle round him. The purest among men, described as those who never rest, hold the oars. He himself carries in his hand the lance which is to transfix the serpent Apap, who is also Set the malevolent. One of the hymns of the worship of Ra in the "Book of the Dead," runs :—

"Hail, thou who art come as Tum, and who hast been the creator of the gods!
Hail, thou who art come as soul, of the holy souls in Amenti!
Hail, supreme among the gods, who by thy beauties dost illumine the kingdom of the dead!
Hail, thou who comest in radiance and travellest in thy disk!
Hail, greatest of all the gods, bearing rule in the highest, reigning in the nethermost heaven!
Hail, thou who dost penetrate within the nethermost heaven, and hast command of all the gates!
Hail, among the gods, weigher of words in the kingdom of the dead!
Hail, thou art in thine abode (nest) creator of the nethermost heaven by thy virtue.
Hail, renowned and glorified god! Thy enemies fall upon their scaffold!
Hail, thou hast slain the guilty, thou hast destroyed Apap (the serpent of darkness")."[1]

These sublime hymns to the sun do not go so far as to identify that luminary with the supreme god, one of whose appellations is "The mysterious soul of the Lord of the disk," or simply, "soul of the sun."[2] These poems contain also more than one allusion to his highest function as conqueror of the power of darkness and judge of the dead.

"Thy soul," it is said, "tries those who are in the nethermost heaven. Thou givest breath to him who is in the kingdom of the dead." In fact the triumphal progress of this light-god is the sublime symbol of the destinies of man, or rather he carries man along with him into the light of life beyond the darkness of death, after associating him with his conflict as with his victory over the power of evil, if he has merited this redemptive union.

[1] Tiele, "Comparative History," pp. 83, 84.
[2] Tiele, p. 44.

Not only does the sun set in the west to rise again, so also does the soul of the just. Thus these regions which seemed given over to the curse, are lighted up with a glorious hope, and beyond the dark veil which nightly falls upon the earth, lies the satisfaction of that deep, intense craving for immortality, which was the noblest aspiration of the whole Egyptian world.

We have only spoken of the greater gods of the Egyptian pantheon, those which under various names we find to be essentially one both at Thebes and Memphis, and which ultimately become merged into one another. A multitude of other gods were worshipped in Egypt, but they were only manifestations of the same divine principle presented under a variety of aspects, solar and sidereal, so many modes of the one Divine being, peopling the heights of the sacerdotal theodicy. To the common people however they were all separate deities. There were numerous personifications of the moon. The most familiar is Thot, at the head of Ibis, the divine scribe, the god of sacred science, the registrar of judgment.[1] The gods are always grouped in triads, and form one long chain of emanations from the supreme deity.

We have referred to the great triads of Memphis and Thebes. We find the same elsewhere under other names, without any change in the fundamental idea of the Egyptian religion. We are always brought back in the end to the higher triad, that is, to the conception of a supreme god reproducing himself and living again in his son, through whom he overcomes the power of evil, which itself also proceeds from him and is only contingently and apparently evil. We know that the Egyptians believed that these gods had once actually reigned upon the earth, and that they formed the first dynasties of the Egyptian monarchy in a remote past.

In order to understand fully the highest moral development of the religion of Egypt, we must remember what was the Egyptian idea of man, of his origin and destiny, and of his life beyond the grave. Men are supposed to have sprung from the two eyes of the supreme god.

[1] Lenormant, "Manual of Ancient History," pp. 307, 322.

They are called the flock of Ra, and are subdivided into four races—the Egyptians, Negroes, Asiatics, and the white-skinned nations of the north. Ra is addressed as "Maker of the heavens, creator of the beings produced out of the world, who makes all kinds (sorts) of forms of existence, calls the gods into life, creates himself lord of life, who fills the gods with fulness of life."[1]

The Egyptian anthropology is most complicated, and only to be explained by the animist or spiritist conception of the double. During his earthly life, man is a being composed of mind and body; by the mind he is connected with God, by the body with matter. Mind, before becoming incorporated in matter, is free to visit all worlds. When it enters the body it lays down its robe of fire which would consume the gross elements of matter, and enshrouds itself in an inferior substance called Ba, which is the soul. It only communicates with the body by the medium of the spirit or the breath. The breath penetrates and animates the whole organism. We have thus two beings in the man, each with its double—the mind enshrouded in the soul, the spirit enveloped in matter, and these two doubles interpenetrate each other. Man alone has mind, and is thus distinguished from the brute.[2]

Mind endeavours to rise to the higher life, that is to its own divine life. When man allows the lower nature to predominate, he sinks gradually into nothingness, but not without undergoing cruel torments. If the higher nature prevails, he passes victoriously through the supreme ordeals which await him beyond the tomb, and the issue of which is determined by the judgment of the gods. It is in this after life that he becomes associated with the sun-god whose history becomes his own history, for he so unites himself to him that he is truly in him and bears his name. He calls himself an Osiris, and enters the bark of the sun, to arrive at length on the mysterious shore of the West where all life is renewed.

There is however this difference between the human Osiris and the Osiris of the heavens, that there is nothing

[1] Tiele, "Comparative Religion," p. 83.
[2] Maspero, p. 36.

fatalistic about his deliverance, which depends on the sentence passed on his earthly life. In order that he may be admitted to the honour of the supreme ordeals which are always severe, he must have triumphed here below over the baser passions which wind around his soul like the coils of the serpent, seeking to strangle the sun-god. This god also has his conflict which is described in sublime poetry in the myth of Osiris. When darkness covers the shining heavens and the scattered rays of the sun are quenched in the gloomy waters of the river, it is the effect of the treason of Set, who has attacked Osiris, killed him and scattered his members. But the divine hero is not destroyed. With the dawn he returns to life in his son Horus, who repeats morning by morning at sunrise the victory over the deadly serpent. The war of light against darkness recommences a few hours later, and the same vicissitudes are repeated.

Among men, the conflict assumes an altogether different character. Only elect souls are enlisted in this triumphal warfare: and even those to whom this privilege is granted as the result of the divine judgment upon their lives, are not obliged to exercise it. They enter upon the blessed life. This distinction between the heavenly and the human Osiris seems to us, as we have said, a recognition of the voice of conscience.

Let us follow the soul in that great journey beyond the tomb which is the dominant thought of the Egyptians, by asking how preparation is made for it in this life.

The religion of Egypt does not require that the earthly life should be crippled by extreme asceticism. Man—the son of Osiris, the god of life, the enemy of the power of sterility, darkness and evil—is to do battle with evil along the whole line, commencing with the land of Egypt itself, the soil of which must be saved from barrenness. Hence the religious character of agricultural labour. To make channels for irrigation, to sow the land, to secure fine harvests, to propagate domestic animals, is to do a religious act.

The gods are honoured by every accession to the power of the sacred soil and every triumph over its enemies. Every war, whether for conquest or defence, is a holy

war. Thus the Egyptian king is the highest personification of the supreme god. He is the earthly Osiris *par excellence;* his power knows no bounds, he is the object of real worship. He is greater than a high priest; he is the representative of the deity. "Thy majesty," said an Egyptian to his king, "is as Horus; the power of thy arm extends over all lands." "The god," he adds, in speaking of his interview with the king, "spoke amicably to me. I was like one brought out of the darkness into the light: my tongue was dumb, my lips refused their office, my heart was no longer in my body, so that I knew not whether I was alive or dead." [1] The priesthood gathered around the king has nothing exclusive about it, and in no way resembles a hereditary caste. The priests are taken from among the nobility without any fixed rule. There is no secret doctrine concealed in the mystery of the sanctuaries, from all but the initiated. Any one who desires to search into the depths of the doctrine may do so without hindrance. If the masses of the people fail to apprehend the mystery, it is through their own ignorance or stupidity.

No man is profane except he who wills to be so, or rather he who does not make the necessary effort to apprehend the true meaning of the symbol. The scribe, who plays so large a part in Egyptian society, owes his influence solely to his knowledge, and to this knowledge he has no prescriptive right. No one holds in his hands the key of sacred tradition, and has the right to conceal the treasure in the secresy of the temple; but there is nothing to indicate that the Egyptian priests tried to enlighten their fellow-countrymen. They did not interdict the knowledge of the holy, but they did nothing to impart it to the common people, who thus remained in gross ignorance of the meaning of the symbols.

The result was very harmful, for the symbols were often as gross as the idea of the deity was high and abstract. It would have been deemed a want of respect to give him a human form, which would have brought him too near his worshippers. Egypt would have

[1] Tiele, p. 105.

shuddered with horror at the Greek Olympus with its divinities, which were at first only idealised heroes and charming women. It preferred to borrow from nature a confused and even gross symbolism to express the attributes of its gods. Hence the predominance of animal types. In hymns to the sun-god he is apostrophised as the sparrowhawk, the lion and the bull. The blending of animal and human forms in the statues of Egypt forbade any presumptuous assimilation. The goat and the ram represented the force of reproduction, and symbolised the creator-god. The number of sacred animals to which worship was paid was very large. The ibis and the dog-headed ape (cynocephalus) were sacred to Thot; the jackal was dedicated to Anubis, the sparrowhawk to Horus, the cat to Pasht.[1]

The living animals which were worshipped formed a separate and privileged class in the temples. When we see the care with which the bull Apis, the living image of the sun-god, was chosen, according to special signs, the chief of which was a disc of gold visible between the horns; when we remember the veneration with which these sacred animals were tended and fed by the priests, we cannot fail to recognise in them a sort of special incarnation of the higher divinities. This is a relic of the animal fetishism of ancient times, to which the ignorant multitude still clung, or at least which still continued to blend with their dim perceptions of something higher. We know that the bull Apis was sacrificed at a certain age, and that a tomb was reserved for him in the great necropolis which Mariette exhumed from the sands of the Sahara, that magnificent serapeum, covered with symbolic paintings, which is the true catacomb of Egypt.

The religious celebrations were chiefly festivals commemorative of the history of the god, and the splendour of the temples was reserved for the princes and the priests. The people remained in the outer court. Upon the walls they read the pictured story of their own life and the history of their gods. Each Egyptian would

[1] Tiele, p. 98.

seem to have had his own particular chapel where he performed his religious duties.[1] The worship consisted of the recitation of sacred formularies, and the sacrifices do not seem to have been offered with any idea of atonement, but to minister to the wants of the spirits in Hades.

The true sanctuaries of Egypt were its cities of the dead. Each tomb consisted of three parts—a portico or peristyle, a well, and a chapel where the remains of the deceased were laid. It must not be supposed however that the importance attached to these monuments of the dead, lent a character of sombre sadness to the country. The idea which the Egyptian formed of the future life of those who obtained it as a reward, was in no way vague or abstract. The country of the dead was not shrouded in mysterious shadow. Not only was it enlightened with all the glory of the sun, but it was also the continuation on a grander and higher scale of the familiar earthly life. The terrible ordeals, the stern conflicts, which had to be passed through, were but a repetition of the holy wars in which Egypt gloried. It was understood, moreover, that men were not left to fight alone the battles of the future life, and that if the combatant came out victorious, he would be introduced into the "choir invisible" of spirits divinely illuminated.

Nothing can show more clearly how death was regarded by the Egyptians as merely a phase of life, than these words addressed to a dead man on the day of his obsequies.

"The joy of Amun is in thy heart; thy members are intact. Mounted on thy two-horsed chariot, thou goest up on to thy bark of cedar, and thou comest to the excellent abode which thou hast made for thyself (the tomb). Thy mouth is filled with wine and bread and meat. Beasts are sacrificed, amphoræ are opened. Sweet songs are sung before thee. Thy chief perfumer anoints thee with essences. Thy controller of the waters is wreathed with garlands. Thine intendant brings thee geese. Thy fisherman offers thee fish. Thou art

[1] Tiele, p. 115.

established and thine enemy is overthrown. All that was said against thee is blotted out; thou standest before the cycle of the gods, and comest forth acquitted."[1]

Let us follow the soul through the vicissitudes of this its great journey. The body, under the form of a mummy, is placed in the chapel of the dead, after undergoing the preparation which is to preserve it from dissolution, so that the soul may resume it intact in the consummation of all things. The sacred formularies contained in the "Book of the Dead" are placed beside the corpse as a talisman against evil. "He who knows this book," says a sarcophagus of the eleventh dynasty, "is one who in the day of resurrection in the under-world, arises and enters in; but if he does not know this chapter he does not enter in so soon as he arises." The close of the first chapter is as follows: "If a man knows this book thoroughly and has it inscribed upon his sarcophagus, he will be manifested in the day, in all (the forms) that he may desire, and entering into his abode will not be turned back."[2]

The "Book of the Dead" is as explicit as possible on the importance of preserving the body intact. The soul was supposed to sleep or become extinct during the forty days that were occupied in the process of embalming. It then revived and was again joined to the body. This blessing is prayed for in the following passage: "O ye liberators of the souls of them that are built into a house of Osiris (*i.e.* mummified), liberate the soul of —— whom ye have made a house of Osiris. He sees as ye see, he hears as ye hear, he stands as ye stand, he sits as ye sit."[3]

While the body lies in its house of repose the liberated soul wanders through space. It has escaped through the opening left in the tomb toward the sacred East. It enters the bark of Osiris to gain the shore where its great ordeals are to commence. The great god Osiris is in the bark and slays the enemies of the deceased.

[1] Maspero, "Études sur quelques peintures et quelques textes relatives aux funerailles" (Paris 1882. Imprimerie nationale).

[2] Tiele, p. 25.

[3] Osburn, "Monumental History of Egypt," vol. i., p. 427.

Carried onward by a favouring wind, the bark reaches the port. Horus shakes his lance, and all the gods rejoice.

Before entering on the final ordeal, the soul undergoes a preliminary trial. If this is unfavourable, the mind remains in the soul, but only to torment it with avenging fury. It enters a new body, which is to be its torture chamber, and from which is to be plunged again into nothingness. The Egyptians recognised a sort of hell in which the guilty soul was to be long tormented before its final destruction. If the judgment was favourable, the soul resumed its members one by one, and was united to its mummy. It then descends into the fields of Aahlou, where it finds a sort of subterranean Egypt. Here it resumes its past life, but idealised and glorified. It labours and tills the heavenly fields with the assistance of helpers, which are represented by the little figures placed in the tomb. "If this Osiris (so the dead man is described), is judged worthy to fulfil in this lower region of the divine, all the labours there required, then every evil principle is taken away from him."[1] The soul is already united to its god, and it is with his aid that it enters on the final conflicts with the terrible monsters at the fifteen gates of the Elysian fields through which it has to pass.

When it comes out victorious from this last ordeal, the mind is reunited with it, and it resumes the body which has been awaiting it in the form of a mummy.

The human being is thus reconstituted in all its elements. Flooded with celestial glory, man is a god among the gods, and becomes in the end a pure intellect which sees God and is absorbed in him.[2]

By the aid of valuable texts recently translated, this funeral drama is made so vivid to us that we feel almost as if we had been eye witnesses of it, and as if our own hearts had been thrilled by its imposing ceremonies. "The rites of burial," says M. Maspero, "were conducted in such a manner as graphically to portray the vicissitudes of the passage of the deceased into the other life. For eighty days the surgeons, carpenters, weavers, sculptors,

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 6, l. 1.

[2] Maspero, "Études sur quelques peintures," p. 84.

were incessantly at work. The mummy was conducted, with great pomp, to its last earthly abode. Slaves bearing offerings went in front of the procession. They carried what might be described as the funeral apparatus, including the amulets. Next came the hired mourners, men and women. Their plaint is thus rendered upon the sides of the hypogeum of a king of Thebes. "To the west the most excellent one, hater of lies! In peace, in peace to the west! O excellent traveller from earth into the eternal country, thou hast been suddenly snatched away. O thou who wast surrounded by so many, behold thee now in the land which loves solitude. Thou who delightedst in walking, behold thee fettered, bound in grave clothes! Thou who lovedst to adorn thyself, thou art laid down in thy garments of yesterday. He who weeps for thee follows thee with lamentation and mourning."[1]

The officiating priest went before the bier on which the mummy was laid, surrounded by the family and friends. "To the west, O oxen, to the west," cried the bearers. A flotilla escorted the bark which carried the deceased over to the western bank of the Nile. "O, sailors," exclaimed the widow, "do not hasten; leave him to me. You, you will come back to your homes; but he, he goes into the eternal country. O bark of Osiris, thou hast crossed over, and thou art come to take away from me him who now forsakes me."[2] The dead man was set upright in the hypogeum. A funeral feast was spread. The priest presented the offering to Osiris with libations, while the women of the family covered the bier with flowers, and embraced it, exclaiming, "Leave us not!" "He lives no more," said his friends; "the worthy man, the friend of truth who never uttered a lie. To the west; to the west!"[3] "I am thy sister," says another inscription, "leave me not." Dost thou mean that I should leave thee? How can it be? If I go away thou art henceforth alone. O thou who lovest to talk with me, thou art silent; thou dost speak no more."

An aged female slave cries out, "He has been taken away from me; the master forsakes his servants."

[1] Maspero, p. 141. [2] Ibid., p. 134. [3] Ibid., p. 134.

The last rites were performed by the son in the depths of the vault. All these successive rites were depicted upon the walls of the hypogeum. On it were also represented the little figures designed to assist the deceased in the fields of Aahlou.

The following inscription is written under the representation of a bark conveying the mummy to Abydos: "Cross in peace to Abydos, to follow Osiris. The great chief is with you. To the west, to the west, the land of the just, O thou who goest away safe and sound, the favourite of thy master, thou against whom nothing has been found. O Osiris, grant him a gentle breeze. May he be among those who are to be praised in the land of the living!"

The many inscriptions which were placed upon the funeral bark show clearly that it was meant to represent the very bark of Osiris, in which the deceased made the great voyage. He is represented standing in his cabin, commanding the ship. In an inscription, entitled: "The Chapter of the Book of the Dead," Nu says to Maut, to Set, to Osiris, to Hathor, the gods who are in the lower world, that they should lend sails to Osiris N—— (that is to the dead man who is identified with Osiris) and should protect him evermore.[1]

The great voyage begins at Abydos, but this does not imply that the body must necessarily be buried there. After the celebration of the obsequies at Thebes upon the western bank of the river, it suffices to place a stela at Abydos.[2]

The deceased is represented as frozen with fear in the prospect of the conflict which awaits him. It wrings from him cries of sorrow which are reproduced upon his tomb: "Back, O crocodile, back, O thou that keepest me from reaching the shore.[3] The deceased trembles at the thought of the seven evil genii which on the day of judgment cut off the head of the condemned and tear out his entrails.

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[1] Maspero, p. 131.
[2] Ibid., p. 126.
[3] "Livre des Morts," c. 31, l. 1.

In order to escape these perils, the funeral rites must be multiplied. "I live," says the deceased, "by the offerings made to Osiris." When these have been presented according to the prescribed rites, he exclaims triumphantly: I am Horus, son of Isis; I come to see my father Osiris. "I am Ra!" "I begin life again after death, as the sun does each morning."[1]

Talismans and magic arts are not disdained, as is shown by many plates in the "Book of the Dead." One of these represents on a large scale the judgment of souls. We are in the great hall of the supreme tribunal. It is supported by columns with capitals of lotus leaf. Between the sixth and seventh column, the sun-god Shu (the principle of light and heat) stretches out his arms above two sacred eyes symbolising North and South. This is an allusion to the daily course of the sun, which is a promise of the resurrection. At the two extremities of this row of capitals, a monkey holds the scales, a symbol of the judgment by which actions are weighed. Below the frieze appear the forty-two accusing spirits, "the assessors" of Osiris, "with their knives ready to inflict torments on those who fail in the balance." The deceased on his knees pleads the purity of his life. Osiris, seated in a central chapel before an altar laden with offerings, presides over the assembly.

At the entrance of the hall is seen another dead man, introduced by the goddess of truth. "I present myself," he says, "before the lord of eternity. There is no evil in me. Hail to thee, O god, who art the good. Lord of Abydos, grant that I may pass safely through the dark way, and join thy servants in the fields of Aahlou." Horus and Anubis weigh in scales the heart of the man, which ought to balance the image of truth. If this condition is fulfilled, Thot, the sacred scribe, registers the sentence, and adds: "Let the heart be restored to its place in the person of Osiris." This is the signal for the resurrection of the mummy. This now becomes the purified vesture of the soul, which enters on the final conflict before its supreme beatitude.

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 37, l. 2; c. 38, l. 4; c. 39, l. 2.

The identification with the gods is expressed with singular audacity. "I am Osiris; I am Horus; I am Anubis," says the deceased. "I take my flight among the gods. I change myself into a swallow, a serpent, a crocodile, a phœnix."[1] These animals represent the various aspects of the sun-god. In his song of triumph he likens himself to all the gods whose members are made those of his own body. "My hair is like that of Nu (the firmament); my face is like that of Ra (the sun); my eyes are like those of Hathor (the Egyptian Venus)," and so on.[2] "I am the seed of the gods." "My dwelling is eternity, the very estate of the lord of the years, the ruler of eternity."

Assuredly such a religion was not wanting in grandeur; the life of a great people could be nurtured by it. The moral law had its sanction beyond this life, alike for the king and the meanest of his subjects. The State rested upon a solid basis. The family had its moral bond, and there is something grand in the spectacle of this grave and mystical land of Egypt, on the banks of the Nile—the symbol to it of the mysterious river which bore away the bark containing its beloved ones. In every sun which set to rise again, it saw the certain prophecy of the resurrection of its dead, and gazed upon the purple west with a look full of hope, profoundly believing that the crown of immortality would encircle the brow of the just. It well justified the saying of Diodorus Siculus: "The Egyptians call the dwellings of the living inns, because in them they live but a short time; the tombs of the dead however they call eternal abodes, since in Hades they continue to live on in a limitless eternity."[3]

The Egyptian religion breathes throughout a lofty morality. Before we seek for the highest expression of this in the "Book of the Dead," we may draw attention to the treatises on practical morality which M. Maspero has analysed. The first was written at the close of the fifth dynasty. After enjoining faithfulness to the ancient

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 81, 83.
[2] Lenormant, "Ancient History of the East," p. 310.
[3] Tiele, p. 68.

traditions of the country, it insists upon goodness in the family relations. "Love thy wife and do not quarrel with her," says the wise man. "Cherish her, adorn her; she is the luxury of thy life. Perfume her, make her glad, as long as thou livest; render thyself worthy of her possession. Be not as a brute to her."[1]

The maxims of the scribe Ani, addressed to his son, are of a much later date, and rise yet higher. Man, according to Ani, ought to have ever present with him the thought of death. "Set before thyself a life of unswerving rectitude, so shalt thou prepare for thyself a fitting grave in the valley of death. The messenger of death is already at hand to take thee away. Say not: I am still a child. Death comes alike to the newborn babe and to the old man. Thy first duty is to the gods. Give thyself to the deity. From his hand comes the mortal blow." Next comes the obligation to respect old age, and to love the mother who bore the child and nursed it at her breast. The study of science ought not to supersede that of chastity. "Beware," says the scribe to his son, "of the strange woman; she is as deep flowing water; her windings are unknown. Take a young woman, and love her with patient gentleness." Generosity to the poor, without prodigality, is the first duty of the rich. "Eat not bread in the presence of a servant who stands before thee, without offering him a morsel. There is peace to him who acts brotherly. Speak gently to the stubborn. A man falls through his tongue. Beware, not to bring ruin upon thyself. Watch not from thy house what others are doing, and receive not ill-gotten gain. A man must learn to be content with his lot. Thou hast made for thyself a well-watered garden; thou hast enclosed thy land with hedges; thou hast planted rows of sycamores; thou fillest thy hands with thine own flowers; yet a man grows weary of all this."[2]

The same benevolent morality is inculcated in a demotic papyrus in the Louvre. This is characterised by a beautiful feeling of respect and consideration for the weak. "Illtreat not thy wife whose strength is less than thine own; do not make a child suffer because it is weak. Do

[1] Maspero, "Papyrus Priss.," x., 9-10.

[2] Ibid., p. 70.

not amuse thyself by making thy dependants afraid. Never save thy life at the expense of the life of others."

The well-known chapter 125, in the "Book of the Dead," which contains the pleading of the soul in the hour of judgment, is the crowning expression of Egyptian morality. "I know you," says the soul in this solemn hour, "ye lords of truth and justice."

"1. I have neither done any sin, nor omitted any duty to any man.
2. I have committed no uncleanness.
3. I have not prevaricated at the seat of justice.
4. I have not spoken lightly.
5. I have done no shameful thing.
6. I have not omitted certain ceremonies.
7. I have not blasphemed with my mouth.
8. I have not perverted justice.
9. I have not acted perversely.
10. I have not shortened the cubit.
11. I have not done that which is abominable to the gods.
12. I have not sullied my own purity.
13. I have not made men to hunger.
14. I have not made men to weep.
15. I have done no act of rapine.
16. I have not accused of rapine falsely.
17. I have not revived an ancient falsehood before the face of men.

* * * * *

26. I have not falsified the weights of the balance.
27. I have not withheld milk from the mouth of the infants.
28. I have not driven away the flocks from their pasturage.
29. I have not netted the ducks (of the Nile) illegally.
30. I have not caught the fishes (of the Nile) illegally.
31. I have not (unlawfully) pierced the bank of the river when it was increasing.
32. I have not separated for myself (clandestinely) a channel (arm) from the river when it was subsiding.

33. I have not extinguished the perpetual (hourly lamp).
34. I have not added anything to any of the sacred books.
35. I have not driven off any of the sacred cattle.
36. I have not stabbed the god (sacred animal) when he comes forth (from his shrine.)" [1]

It would be easy to show how this chapter of the "Book of the Dead" includes all the moral precepts of the decalogue. The difference lies in the spirit. The reader must have remarked that in this moral code, the most minute observances are put upon the same level with the fulfilment of the divine law in its universal principles. Morality was indeed closely bound up with the religion of Egypt. In his second pleading with the forty-two avengers the deceased goes on to urge:

"I have not lied. . . .
I have not been a listener.
I have not been a babbler.
I have not made a fool of any one.

* * * * *

I have done no violence.
I have reviled no one.
I have not put forth my arm to do wrong.
I have not oppressed the weak.
I have not devised the overthrow (of others) in my heart.

* * * * *

I have not reviled the face of the king; neither have I reviled the face of my father.
I have not uttered boasting words.
I have not reviled god." [2]

On these grounds he pleads for deliverance, with the gods who dwell in the abode of truth and righteousness.

In the funeral inscriptions belonging to the Middle Kingdom, there are touching descriptions of true kindness. "No little child," says one monarch, "was vexed by me, no widow was ill-treated, no fisherman disturbed, no

[1] Osburn, "Monumental History of Egypt," vol. i., pp. 430, 431.
[2] Ibid., p. 432.

herdsman obstructed. There is no pentarch whose men I have forced to do labours. I made the inhabitants live, for I gave to them of the fruits of the land, so that there were no famines in the province."

Another says: "I gave water to the thirsty; I put the traveller on his way. I removed the oppressor, and put an end to violence." [1]

It is true that the same inscription celebrates the terrible vengeance executed by a governor upon his enemies, whose houses he sacked and slew the women. Nor must we forget how opposed the magical value attached to religious rites was to the true development of the moral life. The fact remains however, that morality was a real and powerful factor in the land of the Pharaohs.

And yet Egypt lacked in every department, alike in art, morals and religion, that lofty idealism which manifests itself not so much in results obtained as in the yearning aspiration after the unknown, the highest, the purest, the best, the oasis of blue in a cloudy sky. Egypt was self-satisfied; it might be called the Pharisaic nation of antiquity. No tearful chant or wail of penitence broke from its lips. "I am clean from all transgression" is the whole burden of its plea, and this it puts into the lips of its best representatives, for it abandons beforehand, as victims to the annihilation of the tomb, the wicked, for whom there is no pardon or restoration. Like a swarm of gnats that darken for a few hours the limpid clearness of the atmosphere, and then vanish away, so the wicked are consigned to hopeless destruction after the judgment. This judgment is only the final award in which the righteous receives his recompense. There is no place then for cries of distress, suppliant prayers and promises of amendment. The celestial recorder determines what is due to each, and all is done. Immortality does not necessarily imply a transformation of the whole being. It is but the normal development of the present life recommenced after certain ordeals. The issue is happiness rather than holiness. Delight in life, we are told, is a special characteristic of the gods. "Osiris re-

[1] Tiele, p. 129.

joices in living."[1] The traveller who has laid up a good store of strength, sustenance and virtues, is sure to arrive at a good end, provided that upon earth his body is preserved and nourished in the tomb. Everything is thus methodically and harmoniously arranged. Hence Egypt knows nothing of the dark despair of Buddhist India, to which all finite being seems accursed. Egypt takes duration for infinity; the life beyond the grave does not essentially differ from the earthly life, except in its last serene absorption in the absolute, of which scarcely anything is said.

Nor did the Egyptian look, as the Semite did, for the future deliverer, the Saviour-hero who was to put an end to an imperfect and miserable existence. He hoped for no Messiah. He knew neither seer nor prophet, because he was satisfied with his earthly present, on the one condition that it should be perpetuated to all eternity. Nor had Egypt properly speaking any philosophers, searching for broader truth, lifting with trembling hand the veil of the visible world to let the fuller light stream in. It had its scribes who recited sacred formularies, and this sufficed. Osiris never speaks, like Prometheus, of a mysterious god of the future, greater than those of the present. The Egyptian priest has but an ill-defined mission, for there is no atoning virtue in the sacrifices which he offers. They are mere acts of homage or means of reinforcing the strength of the celestial combatants. We shall show presently how deficient Egypt was also in high art.

Such is the State religion of Egypt. Imperfect as it is, we would not depreciate its real greatness. The very conception of immortality is a grand factor, even though it rise but little above the ideal of the actual life. A still grander thing is the conception of law and responsibility, triumphing over the fatalistic principle theoretically implied in the Egyptian theodicy. The great error, the great defect of Egypt, was that it was so content with what it had received that it did not crave for more. Hence its age-long immobility, which has made it in some respects the China of the West. It had nevertheless its better intuitions, which raised it above itself. Sometimes

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 3, l. 3, 4.

its conception of the divinity seems to grow purer and more tender, as in the fragment of the poem of the scribe Pentaûra, celebrating a victory of Rameses II. He exclaims: "Shouldest thou be my father, O Amun? behold, and should a father forget his son? Have I then put my trust in my own thoughts? Have I not walked according to the word of thy mouth? Has thy mouth not directed my marches? and have thy counsels not guided me? Amun will bring low those that know not god." In the hour of peril, the prince boasts that Amun was better to him than millions of his men of war. "The snares of men are nought. Amun will overcome them."[1] Amun is described in a hymn of the new Empire, as the "greatest in heaven, the oldest upon earth, the Lord who gives to everything existence and duration." "His hands give to those whom he loves, but his enemy he casts down into the fire, for his look annihilates the workers of iniquity, and the ocean engulfs the wicked whom he consumes." "Thou alone existent, the creator of being." "In thy rest, thou watchest over men, and considerest what is best for the beasts. . . . As high as heaven, as wide stretching as the earth, as deep as the sea, the gods fall down before thy majesty, extolling the spirit of him who has created all things. . . . Praise to thy spirit because thou hast made us; we are thy creatures, thou hast placed us in the world."[2]

The identification of man with his god in his passage through the ordeals that lie beyond the grave, is an idea full of grandeur, though it is but a logical sequence of the pantheistic conception of the deity, as present in his completeness in each of his manifestations. From a purely ideal point of view, the deceased is Osiris, just as the ray of sunlight is the sun even before it returns to its central fire. But the abstract idea is lost sight of. The hope of a real union of the soul with the beneficent deity, and of its consummation in him, grows up, and religious feeling bridges over the metaphysical void. This god who himself enters into the community of our sufferings, speaks to the heart rather than to the mind. When Osiris says to the suffering creature, that since he himself

[1] Tiele, "Comp. Religion," p. 152. [2] Ibid., p. 184.

received the great wound,[1] he is wounded in every other wound, the soul which receives this saying rises higher and goes further than his intellectual pantheism would logically lead him. So also with that other passage in the "Book of the Dead," in which the god takes our defilement on himself that he may purge it away. "When the lord of truth cleanses away defilement, evil is joined to the deity, that the truth may expel the evil element. The god who wounds becomes a god who more abundantly comforts."[2] These closing words are sublime, one of those lightning flashes which suddenly illuminate the mysterious depths of human life, and yet leave no lasting trace. Life goes on in its accustomed course under a paler light.

From a moral standpoint, conscience seems to lift itself up in its majesty, throwing off the heavy burden of hieratical formularies and incantations which tend to lull it to sleep, when it is appealed to as the chief witness whose deposition is to be made before the tribunal of final judgment: "O heart, heart, which comes to me from my mother," cries the deceased, "heart of mine, necessary to my existence when I was upon the earth, rise not up as a witness against me, because of what I have done before the gods!"[3] Conscience does witness against him however, disturbing the Pharisaic self-complacency expressed in the proud refrain: "I am clean; I am clean." We need no clearer proof of this than the following passages from the "Book of the Dead."

"All these blemishes that are upon me are the things that I have done against the lord of eternity from the day of my birth."[4] The deceased addresses himself in these words to the four monkeys seated at the four corners of the lake of fire: "Take from me all defilement, cleanse me from all iniquity, that no evil may cleave to me." "We take away thy faults," reply the gods thus invoked, "we cleanse thee from the defilement contracted upon earth to thy hurt. We purge away all thy remaining impurities."[5]

[1] The reference is to the wound inflicted on the god by Set
[2] "Livre des Morts," c. 14, l. 3, 4.
[3] Ibid., c. 30, l. 2.
[4] Ibid., c. 17, l. 37,
[5] Ibid., c. 216, l. 3-5.

"There is no more evil in me," exclaims the dead man, "nor any more of the impurity of my mother. I am delivered."[1] These words seem to imply the idea of an original stain inherent in humanity.

We may perhaps find a trace of this feeling of the general corruption of man in the fact that the priest is called the pure man, *Ab.* This brings out the idea which lies at the basis of the Jewish priesthood, that in order to appear before God there must be exceptional purity. This sense of sin however never becomes the dominant idea in the Egyptian religion, for it never leads on to the need of reparation. Man purifies himself.

"O pure ones, O great ones," exclaims the one who is being judged, "I have renounced my sin; I have made good my faults; I have cleansed myself from the impurities that clung to me upon earth." It is evident that the intuitions of a loftier, more searching morality, were but transitory, and the Egyptian fell back in the end upon his old religion, pantheistic in theory, austere and serious in practice. He held firmly the belief in a retributive immortality, but ignored those strong and mysterious yearnings in which the soul goes forth to meet the future, and which wring from it cries of pain and even of despair under the overwhelming pressure of evil. There was no land where the unknown God had fewer worshippers than in Egypt.

The religion of Egypt dwindles down pitiably in course of time. After its great era, we find the pantheistic elements predominating almost exclusively, and attaching themselves to the great feminine deities such as Isis, which are increasingly regarded as mere personifications of nature. We know what a fascination the worship of Isis exercised in the decay of the ancient world. Faith in immortality itself grew dim under the Ptolemies, as appears from these lines, otherwise beautiful. "O my brother, O my friend," says a dead woman, "cease not to drink, to eat, to drain the cup of joy, to love, to keep the feasts; follow ever thy desire, never let sorrow fill thine heart so long as thou art upon earth; for Aahlou is the land of heavy sleep and of darkness, a dwelling of death for those

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 64, l. 7.

who remain in it. They sleep in their bodiless form; they know no more father nor mother, nor children. Since I have been in this country I weep for the water which springs up yonder. I weep for the rising of the Nile that it might refresh my heart in its sorrow, for here dwells the god whose name is All-death. He calls all the world to him, and all the world comes, to submit itself, fearing his wrath. Little recks he of gods or men. The small and the great are both alike to him. Every one fears to pray to him, for he will not hear. No one comes to praise him, for he is not good to his worshippers, nor does he regard any offering that they bring him." [1]

This marks a great retrogression from the religious type of Egypt in its best days. Purely secular Egyptian literature was never of much importance, especially as compared with Egyptian art, the function of which was really priestly. Apart from the moral treatises which we have mentioned, it consists of a few tales and romances. It is a sort of morality in action, rudely adorned with an element of the marvellous, but without any true development of the imagination either in the form or substance. The theme is always libertinism and its punishment. The heroes of these escapades belong to the royal race. Thus there arose a school of scandal sometimes verging on buffoonery, for buffoonery was not alien to this serious race, which was even capable of caricature.[2]

It was in art properly so called that the Egyptian realism was most apparent. Egyptian art combines to an extraordinary degree, largeness of dimension with narrowness of inspiration. It represents that which is; never that which ought to be. It is essentially realistic, for the Egyptian knows nothing higher than his own civilisation either in worship or belief. If there is anything noble in this realistic art, it is because the reality itself is noble. The artist magnifies without transfiguring or embellishing his subject. Ignoring the pursuit of the ideal, he preserves the serenity which is a trait of beauty; but under all its diverse forms—architecture, sculpture, painting, literature—Egyptian art is destitute of the

[1] Maspero, p. 61.
[2] Maspero "Contes populaires de l'ancienne Egypt." Paris, 1881.

poetic insight which reveals depth of distance outlying the near horizon, and is ever suggesting that beyond the things that are seen and handled and felt, there is an unseen and impalpable something which informs the material like a living soul.

Egyptian art is moreover eminently utilitarian. Its mission is not to elevate the soul and glorify the gods, but to aid in the performance of worship, and above all to promote the welfare of the dead. We must not forget that the dead derive real advantage from the things reproduced by the chisel of the sculptor, because there is in this reproduction an element of vitality.

The omnipotence of the king, which enabled him to dispose at will of an entire nation, rendered possible those huge constructions which are found all over the land of Egypt, and chiefly in the great religious centres. They could not have been accomplished without the levying of whole armies of workmen.

The peculiar characteristic of the Egyptian monuments is their horizontal extension. No soaring spire or tower rises from the midst of these gigantic edifices, which are all connected with one another. They are marvellous in their massiveness, but they are dwarfed and low, and of the earth earthy. The idea they give is of stability and endless duration. They look all the heavier because they are relieved by so few openings to let in the light. The Egyptian temple is a succession of gigantic buildings all in connection.[1] We have first the avenues of sphinxes, mythological lions representing the sun. These avenues lead to gates opening upon a vast enclosure, in which one or more small lakes or basins have been hollowed out for the passage of the mystic bark. Then come the "pylons, consisting of a tall rectangular doorway flanked on either hand by a pyramidal mass rising high above its crown. Both portal and towers terminate above in that hollow gorge which forms the cornice of nearly all Egyptian buildings. From the base of the pylon spring those vertical masts from whose summits many-coloured streamers flutter in

[1] "History of Ancient Egyptian Art," vol. i., p. 333, *et seq.*, Perrot and Chipiez.

the sun."[1] The hall of assembly, reserved for the inferior clergy, is supported by eight columns; it is entered through a court. Then comes the sanctuary, which is only open to the King and the superior priests. This is approached through a great square court with two side chapels.

In this most holy place are kept the sacred bark and the statue of the god, but the latter is often replaced by a mere symbol. There is room for any number of chapels in the circumference. A great wall encloses all these sacred edifices. This arrangement of the temple is explained by the purpose for which it is intended. Being closed to the people, it is really a sort of huge sacristy into which the officiating priests go to fetch the sacred objects designed to figure in the processions at the great feasts. The temple is primarily the monument of kingly devotion. Thus its innumerable bas reliefs always represent the offerings of the king, and the deliverances wrought for him by the gods in his victorious wars. They contain the monumental archives of the kingdom. Hence their lack of religious elevation; there is nothing to lift the gaze on high, no altar, nothing to suggest a sense of sin. There is neither prayer nor sacrifice. In order to show that it is the abode of a god, his statue must be brought out of the arcana of the sanctuary and carried in procession. Between the temple and the palace there is scarcely any difference; in both there is the same horizontal extension, the same monotonous grandeur. The Greek temple is not open any more than the Egyptian, to the nation of worshippers, but it presents to the eye a harmonious whole. Its outlines are so described that they blend in a shape of beauty. It impresses on the stone or the marble the seal of a prevailing thought, because the genius by which it is inspired has risen above the pantheistic naturism, which is capable only of reproducing itself in a multitude of objects, never of rising above them. In Greek art quality is more than quantity; hence the Greek temple is beautiful, while the Egyptian temple is only vast. It has no definite proportions, and may be prolonged and extended just according to the munificence of the royal benefactions. It makes

[1] Perrot and Chipiez, "Ancient Egyptian Art," vol. i., p. 341.

no attempt at unity or harmony of form. The true sanctuaries of Egypt are its tombs. Into these it has thrown all its religion. Concern for the preservation of the body outweighs all æsthetic considerations. The mummy is placed below the level of the inundation, and is surrounded by the garments and provisions necessary to its future existence. Beside it are the little figures representing its future helpers in the fields of Aahlou. The numerous paintings upon the walls reproduce all that was brilliant in the earthly life of the dead man, with a view to perpetuating it. Just as the Egyptian has his town house and his country house, so he has his dwelling for the dead made to resemble as closely as possible the earthly home. There is nothing to suggest the great change wrought by death, least of all its awful solemnity. The statue of the dead man not only perpetuates his image, but to some extent his actual personality, for it may take the place of the mummy should that be destroyed. There are stelæ representing the sacrifices offered for the dead man. Each tomb has its vestibule designed for the meals of the dead, and its well and cellar attached to the mortuary chapel. The temple was originally the mere extension of the royal tomb. The pyramid is only the largest of tombs. It is, so to speak, the colossal shrine of the dead. The obelisk distinguishes great places of burial.

We have already spoken of the significance attached to sculptures in the Egyptian funeral rites. It was of the first importance that the sculptured figure should be a faithful representation of the deceased, hence there was no scope for idealisation. The aim was to produce an exact likeness; and the human physiognomy was rendered with admirable precision. The statues of the gods being hidden from the sight of the people in the arcana of the temple, the sculptor had no motive for making them works of art. The blending of human and animal types was moreover wholly incompatible with harmonious beauty of form. The majestic sphinx of Ghizeh is perhaps an exception. There is in its mournful look a mysterious pathos which seems to suggest the great unknown lying beyond the desert. The sphinx is a lion with the head

of a sparrowhawk, a goat or a man. It represents the rising sun, for the lion stands for the sun according to this passage in the "Book of the Dead": "Hail to thee, O lion doubly strong, who liftest on high thy double plume, lord of the diadem, who rulest by the lash, thou art the vigorous male who puttest forth thy beams of light."[1] When the lion has the head of a man he represents Pharaoh.

The importance attached to animals in the religion of Egypt did much to perfect their representation, which is often admirable. The archæological value of the paintings, which make the whole life of the Egyptian soldier or field labourer pass before our eyes, is much greater than their artistic merit. The abstract character of Egyptian art, with its tendency to generalise rather than to go into detail, is little adapted to the picturesque or to the reproduction of actual life. What it did express most forcibly was the idea of stability, of boundless duration. It was in this respect the faithful interpreter of the master thought of Egypt, which abhorred nothing so much as destruction, and was far more anxious to have life indefinitely prolonged than raised to an ideal perfection.

[1] "Livre des Morts," c. 162, l. 1.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGION OF PHŒNICIA.[1]

THE Phœnician religion is greatly inferior to the religion of Egypt. It has neither the same originality, the same rich symbolism, nor the same high moral tone. We find in it the same naturism, the same elementary pantheism, but we miss the eager gaze fixed on the regions beyond the grave, that mysterious land of the West, whence, like the setting sun, everything comes forth to live again. As has been well said, it borrowed its gods from Chaldea, and only dressed them up after the Egyptian

[1] See M. Ph. Berger's excellent article in the "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger"; Renan, "Mission de Phénicie," 1864; Mövers "Die Phœnicier," a book still of importance though somewhat superseded; Perrot and Chipiez, "History of Ancient Phœnician Art," vol. iii.; Tiele, "Comparative History of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Religions;" Maspero, "Histoire ancienne de l'Orient." The only complete piece of Phœnician literature is found in the fragments of Sanchoniathon's Cosmogony. It is a mistake to deny that such an author ever existed, but his work has been much manipulated by Philo of Byblos, who pretends to translate him. Eusebius, in his "De Præp. Evan.," gives many extracts from "Sanchoniathon." His work is evidently a distortion of Genesis, in which, after the manner of the Gnostics, abstractions are transformed into divine hypostases, linked together by a sort of genealogy of emanations. We feel sure that the description of the creation and of the formation of Adam by the supreme God, must have come out of Genesis, as also the vague reminiscence of the mythical trees of the Garden of Eden and the rivalry between Esau and Jacob. It is easy to see what is borrowed from the traditions of Egypt and Chaldea. Perhaps the author has reproduced with considerable modification what he had seen upon the Phœnician tablets. In this way we are carried back to the same historic basis which we found in Chaldea, and which constituted the most ancient tradition of the Asiatic East. Sanchoniathon strangely degrades the myth of Adonis under the influence of Greek euhemerism. His book, which is of the date of the Seleucidæ, has no order in it, for it reproduces pellmell the cosmologies of the various Phœnician towns. On this subject see M. Renan's very interesting article in the "Journal des Savans," vol. xxiii., 1883, p. 24.

pattern, allowing them but a very restricted and almost entirely earthbound horizon. Phœnicia had however a considerable influence over the development of the ancient world, because it was the first to set sail on the broad ocean, and by its daring navigators it carried Eastern ideas throughout all the coasts of the Mediterranean. It gave to Greece the first elements of her mythology, on which she quickly set her own impress, and which she transformed according to her own ideal, as soon as she became a nation.

It is to Phœnicia, moreover, that we owe the invention of the alphabet, which by substituting for the ideographic signs of the demotic writing of Egypt, letters representing sounds, created the most subtle instrument by which language could be fixed and transmitted. This discovery was more important to the ancients than that of printing to the modern world.

The origin of the Phœnicians raises an ethnographical problem difficult to solve. Must we accept Herodotus' statement, that they came from the Persian Gulf and belonged to the Cushite race? or must they be regarded as a powerful branch of the Semitic tree?[1] This seems to us still a doubtful point. However it may be, it is certain that even if they were of Cushite origin, they were not far removed from the Semitic type, and must have belonged to that proto-Semitic race which has left a common impression on all its various branches. It is impossible to doubt that there was a close connection between the Phœnician language and that of the Hebrews, which made communication between them perfectly easy. Syria was originally occupied by peoples belonging to the same race as the Phœnicians, but not rising to the rank of nations. They were merely agglomerations of tribes.

[1] Tiele's ground for connecting the Phœnicians directly with the Semitic race is the great similarity of the languages. He says that this cannot be explained by subsequent relations between them, since the Phœnicians and the Israelites were always at war from the time of the settlement of Israel in Canaan. M. Berger sets against this opinion, the genealogical table of the sons of Noah (Gen. x. 6), in which Canaan is spoken of as the son of Ham, an assertion confirmed by the testimony of Herodotus. Beside, the Phœnician tributaries represented on the tomb of Rekmara, under the Egyptian king Thothmosis III., are not at all Semitic in type.

The Israelites came into contact with their survivors at the time of the conquest of Canaan. They were terrified at the sight of them as though they were a race of giants. "Who can stand before the children of Anak?" we read in the sacred story.[1] These ancient lords of the country seemed to them giants who muttered with voices of thunder, and before whom all other nations were as grasshoppers. The whole of Syria, as the result of successive invasions, was divided among three great races, all sprung from a common stock, and all speaking one language with slight differences of dialect:

1. The Khitas (Hittites), to the north and east of Lebanon.

2. The Canaanites along the coasts, and in the centre and south of the country, in the valley of the Orontes above Nazana (Cesaræa), and the Jordan.

3. The Tarechites, differing slightly from the Canaanites, to the south and east of the Dead Sea, upon the confines of the desert of Arabia. The Canaanites quickly divided themselves into two groups—the maritime group, upon which we shall fix our attention, as the more important, and the group inhabiting the valleys of the interior. To this group belonged the small nations from whom the children of Israel conquered the land of Canaan. In order to make good their conquest, they had to go on fighting for centuries against the former possessors of the soil, who were divided into a number of tribes.[2] The chief of these before the Jewish conquest were the Hittites and the Amorites, the Girgashites and the Tarechites, who were divided into Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites.[3] These tribes inhabited the southern portion of the country bordering on the Red Sea. The Amalekites were desert nomads. The religion of the Canaanites of the interior did not sensibly differ from that of the Canaanites on the sea coast. It had the same basis of belief; but as they stood on a much lower platform of civilisation, they did not elaborate their religion in the same way as the Phœnicians.

[1] Deut. ix. 2. [2] Ibid., ii. 10, 12.
[3] Maspero, "Histoire," 2nd edit., p. 173.

It will be well for us to take this religion at its highest point of development. There is no real difference to be observed between the religion of the Canaanites of the interior and that of the Philistines who occupied the sea-coast of Palestine, where they built five large cities : Gaza, Ashdod, Ascalon, Ekron and Gath. This territory, the intersecting point of Syria with the desert, between the torrent of Egypt and the environs of Joppa, had been allotted to them by Rameses III., after he had repelled their attempt to invade his kingdom. Instead of sending them back to Crete whence they originally came, he gave them a tract of land in Syria. Their population was fed by Amorite fugitives after the victories of the Jews.

As we have said, the Canaanites who dwelt on the coast became important through their commercial activity. They preferred the indefinite empire of the sea, as a source of power and wealth, to territorial extension. They did not found an empire, but contented themselves with forming active centres of aggressive civilisation by building cities along the seaboard. The chief of these were Acre, Tyre, Beyrout, Arva, Sidon, Gebal, Smyrna, Byblos. Each of these cities formed a little kingdom, a principality with its gods, its laws, its magistrates called suffetes, governing itself by an aristocracy and municipality, like Venice and the Hanseatic towns. Their commercial establishments were upon islands at a little distance from the coast, which served at once as fortress and sanctuary. They were in fact like a second city. The first Egyptian monument which mentions the Phœnicians, dates from 1600 B.C. under Thothmosis III. It was at this time they occupied the coast of Syria, and built most of their cities. We are therefore carried back several centuries for the commencement of their dominion in this region. We cannot go into the details of the history. Tyre and Sidon alternated in importance. Their internal history was stormy and confused. The form of government was often modified, being sometimes a monarchy, sometimes an elective magistracy; but the social constitution was never radically changed. Nothing could be more admirable than the Phœnician system of commerce and colonisation, which

extended first to Bœotia, then to the Peloponnesus, then to the island of Cyprus, which was another Phœnicia, and lastly to the coast of Africa, where in 800 B.C. the Phœnicians founded in Carthage a maritime empire which became the rival of Rome. Phœnicia shared in the vicissitudes of Western Asia under the successive domination of Egypt and Assyria, but it repeatedly made heroic struggles to free itself from its oppressors. The most memorable of these was the victorious defence of Tyre against Nebuchadnezzar. Phœnicia could not but bow under the yoke of the great Persian, Greek and Roman conquerors, but it always kept the distinguished place it had won for itself by its colonial enterprise.

We have already noticed the influence exerted by the various aspects of nature upon the development of the religion of nations, which regarded them as the principal manifestations of the divine. The one basis common to all nature-religions is modified according to these various aspects, and reflects them faithfully, till they assume the form of myths, as they become identified with the dim past of the nation's history.

Syria is only another illustration of the same law. This is not like Egypt, a vast plain traversed by a river, the ebb and flow of which is as regular as the rising and setting of the sun. The sea, now smooth and shining, now tossed with tempest, breaks on its rugged shores. High mountain chains run through it. Carmel, Libanus, Anti-Libanus with their snowy peaks, lift their heads under a sky almost always serene and blue. The valleys and plains are rich in vegetation. Carmel puts on in the springtime the beautiful garments of which the prophet of Israel writes, and seems to break forth into joy and singing. Nowhere else perhaps in Western Asia does the spring open with such brilliance and rapidity. The warm breeze seems to carry the fruitful germs on its wings. Nature teems with life. Hence it will not be the idea of death and of the mysterious realm of souls which will be paramount in such a region, intoxicated as it were with the joy of living. Nature will appear here as pre-eminently the mother, the inexhaustible fountain of being, and it will naturally be represented under voluptuous images. It is

easy to understand how Syria became the cradle of the worship of the great goddess Astarte, who lays her spell upon the senses and suffuses universal existence with a flood of delights.

This goddess bears no resemblance to the austère Isis, but rather to the Istar of Babylon, who was also the goddess of fruitfulness, but Astarte is yet more voluptuous in character. Subsequently, under the influence of anthropomorphism, she will become the Venus of immortal beauty, purified by the idealisation of high art. But in Syria the goddess never represents anything higher than the reproductive power of nature, set forth in a type destitute of artistic grace, but none the less effectual in fanning the passions of this fiery race. It was of this voluptuous Astarte that Plautus said in his "Mercator," that she was the very life of men and of gods; that sea, earth and sky did homage to her as the object of universal worship. It should be observed that he put this apotheosis of the goddess into the mouth of a Phœnician.

> "Diva Astarte, hominum deorumque vis, vita, salus
> Eam spectant; illi obtemperant."[1]

Astarte was not less ready to kill than to make alive; she carried on her operations by sudden acts of violence. In such a religion death could not appear, as it did to the Egyptian, like the evening of a glorious day, full of the promise of the coming dawn, but rather like a consuming fire devouring its prey in the twinkling of an eye. Hence the indestructible hope of the future life pales before the strong excitement of sensual passion, or in the alarm of sudden doom.

We shall observe this two-fold character in the Phœnician worship, except in a few privileged cities where, in correspondence with a gentler aspect of nature, we find a milder religion. It is easy to discern even in the advanced religious development of the Phœnicians, traces of the primitive fetishism which worshipped the divinity in the mountains. Their majesty produced a strong impression on man in his barbarous state. They became objects of actual worship to him, as is shown by

[1] Plautus, "Mercator," v. 875.

such inscriptions as "Baal-Hermon," the "God-Lebanon." Sacrifices were offered to rocks and caves. The same veneration was shown to the betylæ, or Bethels, sacred conical pieces of stone, which were called houses of God.[1] This primitive worship was perpetuated even under the Roman Empire. Tacitus said of Carmel, that it was called at once a mountain and a god.[2] When the mountain ceased to be deified it was still the chosen place of worship. Syria always worshipped upon the high places.

As soon as Phœnicia emerged from her state of barbarism, she rose to the conception of the great sidereal gods, which, at this stage of religious development, have been universally recognised as the most striking manifestation of deity. There was always, however, something vague and indeterminate about the solar mythology of the Phœnicians. They never attained to any unity in their terminology of the gods, though their fundamental conceptions were identical. This diversity of nomenclature was a result of their political organisation, which made a settled monarchy impossible. Sidon, Tyre, Byblos, all had their separate divinities, though all exactly resembled each other. The great god was called Baal (the master) at Sidon; Melkarth, Moloch or Melek (the king) at Tyre; Adonis (the lord) at Byblos. Though the name of Baal is given indiscriminately to each of these gods, as the general designation of the deity, it is sometimes used to signify the one supreme god. The inscriptions which describe him as "the Baal of the heavens" indicate this latent monotheism in the mind of man, without which the religious idea would have no existence, and which always manifests itself in the end, if only by a flash of light. It is said of the feminine divinity, that she is "the name of Baal," that is to say, one of his manifestations, which implies that, like the great Egyptian god, she lives again in other gods.[3] That the sun stood for the supreme god is evident from the myth of Adonis, to which we shall allude again, for his death and resurrection can represent

[1] Perrot and Chipiez, "History of Art in Phœnicia," vol. i., pp. 58-61.
[2] Tacitus, "Hist.," ii., 78.
[3] It is said of Astarte, that she is the strength of Baal.

nothing else than the rising and setting of the sun. The name of *El* was also given to him. Side by side with the great solar god, we find in all the religious centres of Phœnicia, the goddess who, under the influence of an anthropomorphism which is really universal, is regarded as his consort. In truth she is only his double, as appears from the inscription already quoted: "Astarte, the name of Baal." At Gebal, the feminine deity was called Baalit, at Tyre, Ashtoreth or Astarte, a divinity to whose importance we have already referred. She was sometimes the goddess of the moon, sometimes that of the planet Venus. She was also called Rabbath, *the great lady.* Lastly, a son was born of the divine couple, who was only the reproduction of the great god, who lived again in him. The Adonis of Byblos is constantly confounded with Adon. Thus the son often becomes the lover of his mother.[1]

The Phœnician triad is evidently derived from Chaldea. It has borrowed the names of the principal gods of Chaldea, Baal and Astarte corresponding exactly to Bel and Istar. The Phœnician pantheon is enriched with a great many other gods, and includes in the first place, the greater part of the Egyptian gods, as Isis, Osiris, Ptah; then purely Semitic gods, such as Shamash, the sun. The most important group of gods next to the triad is that worshipped under the generic name of the Cabirim or the "powerful ones," who represent the seven planets, the elementary spirits from whom proceeds the universe, which is placed under the control of the eighth god called Esmun, the Phœnician Hermes. He had his chief temple at Beyrout. He was in reality the invisible god of the highest heavenly sphere, the god of cosmical fire concealed in the waters of the celestial ocean. His altar was set up on a platform of seven-storied towers or on the summit of high mountains. His name Esmun, "the eighth," is a synonym for the supreme god, as he was supposed to "approach nearest to the primordial Baal." The lions or serpents which surrounded him are the well-known symbols of fire; he was also regarded as the god of navigation.[2] It has been sometimes said that Esmun

[1] Berger, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger." [2] Tiele, pp. 307, 309.

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supplanted Baal and Melkarth. This may have been so, but it must not be forgotten that there was no systematic unity about the Phœnician religion. It was all disintegrated, like the country itself. The Cabirim were the dwarf gods. At Carthage, Esmun appears as the third god of the triad, with Baal-Hamon, who is essentially the god of fire, at once the creator, destroyer and purifier, and with Tanith. We have here a fresh proof of the identity of the third term of the triad with the first, and of the essential unity of the divine principle, which is perpetually manifesting itself under various forms. Such a theodicy is in complete harmony with the Chaldean and Egyptian conception of the divinity.

The Syro-Phœnician worship is less rich in symbolism than the Egyptian, nor is it overladen with rites and magic formularies like the religion of Chaldea. These rough sailors did not feel themselves beset with evil spirits. They escaped the nightmare of perpetual fear. Phœnicia does not seem, as Chaldea did, like a land possessed, and for ever occupied with casting out the demons. The power of evil presents itself to her as one of the manifestations of the power of life and fruitfulness, and the best way to appease it seems to be to imitate it in both phases. Nowhere else, unless it be in Mexico has the dangerous belief so strongly prevailed, that the best way to please the gods is to follow their example. In this imitation there is not only an attempt to glorify them, but also the strange idea that by reproducing their acts, the worshippers become sharers in their life. It is a sort of barbarous communism laying hold of the deity under his twofold aspect. To this imitation a magic virtue is ascribed, just as the magicians of the African tribes imagine that they can bring the rain by imitating the sound of thunder.

Worship becomes a sort of acted mythology, a dramatic representation of beliefs, with this peculiarity, that the drama is taken seriously and is not a mere fiction.[1] Hence the two rites, both equally abominable, of enforced prostitution at the great festivals, and of the sacrifice of the firstborn. This sacrifice is really substitutionary, for

[1] Berger, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger."

the firstborn represents the family. The idea of substitution opened the way for some modification of these cruel rites. "Sometimes a domestic animal, a ram, an ox, a bird, or a stag, was immolated in place of the being to be spared; sometimes the substitute was a stone, which was erected in honour of the god, and became a kind of metaphorical sacrifice."[1] The sacrifice of the firstborn was, however, never completely abandoned.

"To act under the auspices of the feminine divinity," says M. Perrot, in reference to the rites of prostitution, "to feed the flame of the eternal divine principle, was to pay it homage." These prostitutions, which defiled all the sanctuaries of the Syro-Phœnician religion wherever it was planted, alike in the West and in the Asiatic East, were prompted by the belief in a sort of marriage between earth and heaven whence all life proceeds. The idea was that by reproducing this union, its fruitfulness was increased.

In Phœnicia these infamous rites were carried to their utmost length, for among the attendants in the temples, priests, scribes, porters, etc., prostitutes were admitted under the name of singing women, and carried on their abominable trade in caves, the purpose of which is made plain by hideous symbols.[2] The presence of these recognised courtesans did not prevent the sacrifice of virgin purity, and even married women paid periodical visits to these sanctuaries of vice. The absolute dependence of man upon his gods was manifested in many ways. For example, the hair was cut at certain festivals, rings were worn in the ears and nose, the person was laden with sacred amulets to show that the man belonged to his god, whom he looked upon as a merciless creditor. The temple was the bank where these great merchants of the old world paid their debts.[3]

The future life, as we have said, did not much concern them, engaged as they were in the daring and desperate struggle for existence. They thought of it sometimes however. Apart from the invincible instinct impelling

[1] Perrot and Chipiez, "History of Art in Phœnicia," vol. i., p. 74.
[2] Renan, "Mission phénicienne," p. 148.
[3] Berger, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger."

the soul of man to gaze into futurity, they felt in this respect the influence of Egypt, though they relegated to the background that which was always the salient feature in the life of Egypt. In the first place they paid great attention to their burial-places. The tombs were cut in the rock. They were great caves of the dead, often forming a vast necropolis. The bodies were laid in rock-cut niches or corpse-ovens, and beneath each niche a little slab was placed giving the name of the occupant.[1]

The process of embalming seems to have been very simple. The surroundings of the dead, intended to prolong in some measure his earthly existence, were exactly the same as those used in Chaldea and Egypt. Beside the sarcophagi, which often reproduce the human form, were placed statuettes of tutelary divinities.[2] In Deuteronomy, where there are constant allusions to the Canaanitish practices, we find this reference to the sacrifices of the dead. The pious Israelite says, "I have not taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead."[3] When Job says that in his grave he should sleep "with kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves," he expresses the idea of life in that pale land of shades, in view of which the great ones of the land of Canaan built their sepulchres.[4] The idea of death does not appear to have been less terrible to the Syro-Phœnicians than to the ancient Hebrews. The square caves for the dead in the subterranean necropolis at Sidon answer exactly to the gloomy descriptions which we find in the sacred books of the Jews. "The well into which the corpse was let down, and which seemed always opening its mouth for fresh prey, is the jaw of Sheol which devours all flesh."[5]

In one of the most important religious centres of Phœnicia, however, we find a much higher idea—that of a renewal in death, which is evidently borrowed from Egypt.

[1] "History of Art in Phœnicia," Perrot and Chipiez, vol. i., pp. 236, 237.
[2] Perrot, "Art in Phœnicia," vol. i., p. 144.
[3] Deut. xxvi. 14; Perrot and Chipiez, vol. i., p. 145.
[4] Job iii. 13, 14.
[5] Renan, "Mission phénicienne," p. 410.

We proceed briefly to describe this strange worship at Byblos, which, while based upon the same principles as the religion of Phœnicia, gave it a special development, and exerted a deep influence outside Syria.

In this worship we recognise local elements, and others derived from Egypt, which was in close intercourse with Syria. We find in the ruins of Byblos many fragments of statues which are undoubtedly Egyptian. The whole of this district produces an impression at once sad and soothing. M. Renan says: "The infinite charm of nature in these regions invests even the thought of death with a fatal attraction, so that the soul drifts along towards it, lulled by siren songs. The religious emotions are sensuous, slumberous, tearful. Even the Syriac hymns of to-day in honour of the Virgin have a sort of sigh or choking sob in their refrain." [1] The same remarkable writer says again: "The sort of funnel out of which the river flows, is like the central point of a vast amphitheatre, formed by towers and rocks of great height. The river plunges down in one great leap to a fearful depth. There is something delicious in the purity of the water, the freshness of the air, the beauty of the vegetation. The intoxicating charm of nature at these altitudes, makes it easy to understand how man, inhabiting this wonderland, should have been a wild dreamer of dreams."

It was in this enchanted country that the worship of Adonis grew up. It has often been described in vivid colours by ancient writers. In the spring time a mysterious sarcophagus was placed on a catafalque in the midst of the temple. A painted wooden figure with a gaping wound in the side was laid upon the sarcophagus. Beside the corpse, stood the boar which had mortally wounded it in the chase. The dead god was the object of passionate and noisy lamentations which filled the whole city. Women, some with streaming hair, others shaven and smiting their breast, eunuchs dressed as women, ran about the streets as though seeking the dead god. He was carried to his grave with great funereal pomp. Vases full of flowers brought from the garden of Adonis, were exposed to the sun which withered them up, and thus

[1] Renan, "Mission," p. 130.

made them symbols of the death of the young god. The favourite of the goddess of abundance and of love, he had been sacrificed by the cruel god represented by the boar. To the Greeks all this was only a poetical myth of the beautiful Adonis, the lover of Aphrodite, sacrificed by the jealousy of Ares, but at Byblos it was taken to represent at once the drama of nature and that of human destiny. This higher and deeper meaning of the myth comes out from the second great feast celebrated in autumn at the close of the year. The funeral feast, like that of the springtime, lasted only seven days. Mourning was then set aside for the most extravagant manifestations of joy in honour of the god risen and ascended into the sky. This delirious joy was accompanied by lawless license, in which prostitution was freely indulged as a religious rite.

If we analyse the various elements combined in this strange worship, we find in it first of all the dramatisation of the old beliefs peculiar to the whole of Phœnicia, the manifestation of the divinity under the double aspect of life and death. This god, who dies twice over, first under the fervent heat of summer and again at the approach of winter, only to revive in all the fulness of voluptuous life, is the nature-god, always the same under a diversity of forms, for the very power of evil that kills him, is but himself under another aspect. In Asia Minor this idea seems to have been caught from the myth of Byblos, but instead of the slaughter of the god by the boar, he is mortally wounded by his own hand.

He is no longer called Adonis, but Atys. In the second place, we have in the whole of this strange myth, a reflection of one of the most curious characteristics of the country, which has certainly contributed to the special form assumed by the myth at Byblos. M. Renan says: "The mouth of the river Orontes is a charming place. I have there seen reproduced the phenomenon of the blood of Adonis. After heavy and sudden rains, all the streams pour into the sea floods of reddish water, which form a red line all along the coast."[1] The myth of Adonis was essentially agricultural, and represented the alternation of fertility and sterility in nature. A higher idea was

[1] Renan, "Mission," p. 182.

infused into it, as it became identified with the worship of Osiris. We must not forget that Adonis, like the Egyptian god, was a supreme deity. The Adonai of Phœnicia is in fact the Absolute Being, remaining one and the same through all his successive transformations. He may change his name, and be called Lamentation, as the wind-god whose plaint is heard in the murmurs of the air, or Tammuz, the separate one,—when he passes through death, after having been Esmun, in his hidden life; but he never ceases to be the Absolute, the Only One. Containing all beings in himself, he includes and carries them along with him in his external evolution. With him they pass through death, with him they come to life again. Thus the resurrection of the young god is the promise of the universal resurrection; and to man in particular, it is a certain pledge of his immortal destiny, the secret of which remains impenetrable. The history of his god represents for him death with its terrors, and the divine renewal beyond the grave. Nothing can better illustrate the new meaning acquired by the myth, than the repetition of the feasts of Adonis on the occasion of the death of young people who had been remarkable for various gifts.

We have seen how important a part is played in the myth of Adonis, by the goddess who at Byblos is called Baalat. She is first the object of his affection, and then the cause of his mortal wound from the blows of the jealous god. She is indeed the personification of voluptuousness, the sister of death, the mysterious power which only swells the stream of life to dry it up, save as it flows on again in the perpetual renewal of existence.

This lower aspect of the myth of Adonis was that which attracted the most worshippers, especially in other lands, as at Paphos, where the feminine goddess was invested with warlike attributes. The impure saturnalia of Phœnicia seem to have been carried to great lengths in these remote regions, before young Greece introduced what was at least an æsthetic reaction against such excesses. At Ascalon, the capital of Philistia, the feminine deity was called Derceto. The male god became Dagon, represented under the form of a fish. The religion is always the same, with a more marked Babylonian in-

fluence. The Syrian goddess, in the decadence of the ancient world, again became Astarte, the primitive Baalat, and all that was noble in the myth of Adonis was drowned in floods of debauchery.

Phœnician art was like its religion—heavy and formless. In reality, the religion of the country recognised nothing but force, rude brute force,—the force of unrestrained passions. There was nothing in its conception of the divine to lead to the creation of types of beauty.

Thus Phœnicia chose to represent her gods by an image which was often only a conical stone, and did not give them a human form unless by reproducing the Egyptian types. The few original attempts to represent figures are miserable failures, resulting in either monsters or dwarfs. Never was anthropomorphism more abused. There was nothing in the Phœnician religion to encourage the sculptor to aim at truth in his delineation of humanity. Phœnicia was split up into so many sections, that it had not, like Assyria or Egypt, any royal race to magnify. It had no king to stand as the representative of its god. Its only statues were images for the dead. The tomb was a cave hollowed out in the rock upon which were placed other buildings all of the same order. The Phœnician temple strongly resembles the Egyptian. It is only an enclosure more or less extensive, covered with stones laid one upon another, in the centre of which a tabernacle contains the effigy of the god. Phœnician buildings always begin with a monolith. When this does not suffice, other monoliths are added without any artistic arrangement or attempt at harmony of outline. The idea of shaping and transforming the stone never seems to present itself. This massive character of Phœnician art is admirably rendered by M. Renan in the following passage from his "Mission de Phénicie." He says: "The principle of monolithism is the direct opposite of the Hellenic style. Greek architecture starts with the principle of dividing the stones. Where enormous blocks are used the effect is mere massiveness. In the Greek style, the first object was to make the wall beautiful. Now a wall derives its beauty from the symmetry of the joints, corresponding to the lines of the building. Every stone

is a separate unit representing one member of the whole. Absolute master of his material, the Greek architect observes delicacies of structure which elsewhere have been overlooked in the art of building. The Syro-Phœnician architect is the slave of his materials. To him the stone is always a shapeless mass of rock. Huge walls composed of blocks, taken ready made as it were from the quarry, are the essential features of Phœnician monuments."[1] "The only temples of ancient Syria are shapeless high places or caves in the rock."[2]

The temples are filled with precious things, which make us admire the abundance and variety of the materials employed, but show also to what a degree Phœnician art, when it departs from its ordinary massive types, lacks originality. It simply imitates first Egypt and then Greece. It is more successful in industrial than in religious art, but its productions have neither grace nor elegance; they are only the bright and effective goods which command a ready market.

And yet it was by its singularly adventurous commerce, not only in material but intellectual wealth, that Phœnicia showed its true superiority. Commerce is a more rapid and effective medium than war for the exchange of thought. It was needful that the West, which was destined to attain to higher and fuller culture, should receive from the East the first materials for its work. These Phœnicia gave her in great blocks, like those which she left intact at the base of her temples. The Greek spirit moulded them by the chisel of its artists, and transforming the rude stone, drew from it divine types of plastic beauty, instinct with moral life.

Did conscience, the great prophetess, who breaks the shackles of the historic past and foreshadows the truths of the future, remain absolutely without witness in this land of Phœnicia, defiled with so many abominations and watered with so much blood? Was not that blood itself regarded as a means of expiating a life of licentiousness, against which there must have been sometimes an inward protest, though it was so carefully made a part of worship? We do not doubt that it was so, and that noble souls

[1] Renan "Mission," p. 282. [2] Ibid., p. 31.

found expression for their aspirations after a better life in the myth of the dead and risen god. They found some moral satisfaction in the sort of pantheistic monotheism which formed the background of their national religion. There seems to us a touching expression of gratitude to the supreme God in the following inscription: "To our Lord, the master of Tyre. Receive the offering of thy servants. He has heard their cries. May he bless them!"[1] Upon one Phœnician bas relief, we see the worshipper prostrate before his god, evidently representing prayer. But all this is very vague and inadequate, and falls far short of the Chaldean psalms of penitence and the aspirations of Egypt after an immortal life.

Let us recognise in conclusion that the Phœnicians added very little to the religious treasure of the ancient world, but that they fulfilled their mission by helping to circulate that treasure more widely. As we see them on the poops of their vessels, braving unknown seas on missions of peaceful conquest, we feel constrained to admire this valiant race.

[1] Renan, "Mission," p. 227.

BOOK II.

THE RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORIENTAL ARYANS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRIMITIVE ARYANS.

IN the country watered by the Indus and the Jaxartes, including therefore Bactriana and Sogdiana, a race gifted to a remarkable degree with the genius of civilisation, rose to a high stage of moral and social culture. Its very name indicated a sense of its own superiority. By designating themselves Aryans,[1] its sons assumed to be the excellent of the earth, the masters and lords of other peoples, whom they contemptuously called barbarians or stutterers, so highly did these Aryans esteem beauty and clearness of language.[2] This race, destined to play so distinguished a part in the history of humanity, came to be divided into two great branches, the one Western the other Eastern. The Western branch was again subdivided in later times into Greeks, Romans, Celts, Scandinavians and Slavs. The Oriental Aryans comprised Persians, Medes, Bactrians and the higher castes of India. That these nations belonged to the same race is proved irrefragably by the common basis of their language, which has never been obliterated, widely as their destinies and modes of civilised life have diverged. Sanscrit, beyond question the most ancient of these languages, has, in the course of its modern investigation, borne conclusive witness to their community of origin. Comparative philology has led to a still more interesting result, by revealing to us the moral and social state of the

[1] Pictet, "Origines indo-européennes," vol. i. p. 38, *et seq.* See the traces of this appellation pointed out by the learned author in the idioms of Europe.

[2] The word barbarian occurs in the language of both Western and Eastern Aryans, and must have been in use therefore before their separation.

great Aryan race before its dispersion. For it is evident that when we find words identical in the languages of nations now differing so widely from one another, we must conclude that these words belonged to the idiom originally common to them all, and that they have all sprung from one stock. Now as these root-words express ideas and describe facts and usages, we shall be able by grouping them to form some idea of our common ancestors, of their degree of civilisation, their social constitution and their religion.

This is only true of words common to the two great sections of the Aryan race, the Eastern and Western. Those which occur in one section only, belong evidently to a date later than that of their separation. It would be dangerous to push too far this restoration, by the aid of comparative philology, of so distant a past. Hence we must be content with that which is indisputable, namely, analogies which do not stop short of identity. These suffice to give us at least a general idea of the development attained by this noble race, which, like all other races, began in a state of barbarism.[1]

Speaking generally, the Aryans seem to have shaken off more rapidly than the Chaldeans, the nightmare of naturism, with its legion of demons peopling earth, air and water. The country which was the cradle of the race was the most temperate in Asia, and presented far less abrupt contrasts than Chaldea or Phœnicia. It had soft mountain slopes and a sunny climate. The dawn broke over it in poetic mildness; the year had its springtime, and summer did not burst upon the land in sudden, consuming heat. To all this, the language bears testimony. While in all the Aryan idioms winter is designated by a common root, as the season of snows, spring is called the season of reclothing.[2] The earth was then adorned with greenness and flowers, before the parching summer heat began. The

[1] The best book on this point is that already referred to, by M. Pictet: "Les origines indo-européennes et les Aryas primitifs—Essai de paléontologie linguistique," vol. iii. 2nd ed. Paris: Fischbacher, 1878. We know that the inductions of this eminent philologist have been often disputed, and that they are very bold. We accept only that which is verified by ample evidence.

[2] Pictet, vol. i. c. v. § 10, 11.

climate appears to have been peculiarly temperate. It did not benumb the inhabitant, like the eternal frosts of the north, nor prostrate him with pitiless heat. The Aryan had thus his energies at command and was equal to the exertions which the nature of the soil demanded.

Judging by the words which we find common to all the Aryans in their dispersion, and which serve as so many commemorative medals of an obscure past, their ancestors appear to have been really civilised. In the first place, the family bond was recognised. The names of the various members of the family are, so to speak, illumined by a ray of love. The marriage tie was a real one. The husband is spoken of as "*he who provides for and rules his household*," the "kind *master*," and the wife as the "*mistress*,"[1] which implies a union without tyranny on the one hand or degradation on the other. The word father, which is identical in its root in all the Indo-European languages, may be translated: "*he who protects.*" The mother, "*she who bears children.*"[2] The brother is designated as a protector, like the father, for the two expressions are synonymous.[3] The sister is the inhabitant of the house, the one who in her weakness has most need of the shelter of the hearth, the one doubly guarded by father and mother.[4] The duty of protection was also laid on the uncle and aunt. This old language, thus reconstructed, perpetuated the memory of the slavery resulting from war, but it recognised also the servant who is the help of the family—the *famulus*.[5]

Family life thus constituted implies a different kind

[1] Pictet, vol. ii. p. 19.

[2] *Pâtar, mâtar*, words found in all the Indo-European languages. Greek, πατήρ, μήτηρ; Latin, *pater, mater;* Anglo-Saxon, *faeder, modor;* Old German, *fatar, môter. Patar* is from the root *pâ, tueri, servare; mâtar* from the root *mâ, efficère, creare.* Pictet, vol. ii. p. 33.

[3] Sanscrit, *bhrâtar;* Zend, *brâtar;* Greek, φρητήρ; Latin, *frater;* Old Irish, *bráthir.* The root is *bhr, bhar, ferre, sustentare.*

[4] Sanscrit, *svasar;* Latin, *soror;* Gothic, *svistar;* Pictet connects the word with the root *vas, habitare* (ii. p. 55). Sister signifies *she who dwells with the brother.*

[5] The name barbarian or enemy was often given to the servant, who was regarded as a slave, one of the conquered. Pictet, ii. p. 6-9. But there are traces of a milder slavery. *Arati*, in Sanscrit, signifies helper, Greek, ὑπηρέτης; Gothic *airus*, messenger; from the Sanscrit *r, ar*, in the sense of *adire, colere, servire.*

of shelter from the cave of the Troglodyte, or the huts of the ancient Lake-dwellers. The idiom of the primitive Aryans represents a real house, with walls, roof, and even the hearth, from which goes up the smoke, so dear afterwards to the Homeric heroes.[1] It has expressions also for the weapons of the chase, and of warfare, which are described by analogous terms in all the sister languages.[2]

Human blood was recklessly shed, both in battle, and by the assassin's sword. The industrial and decorative arts were of a very primitive character. The clothing was woven instead of being merely the skin of a beast.[3] Iron appears to have been unknown, for it is the only one of the metals not mentioned. But agriculture had already made considerable progress. Wheat and barley were cultivated. All existence seems associated with agricultural life.[4] The boy is the one who *cleans the house or the stable;* he is also called *the young calf.* The girl is the one *who milks the cows.*[5] The pasture is the great field of hospitality. There the host receives the stranger. It is from the pastures that he derives his title of master. He is master first of the sheepfold, then of the tribe,[6] lastly of the nation. The king is afterwards called the shepherd of his people.

Property is already recognised, the furrow forming its boundary. The true wealth is work, which is synonymous with gain.[7] Agriculture is the foundation of wealth. When the great medium of exchange is created subsequently, it takes its name from the possession of cattle. The word money originally signified a flock.[8]

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[1] Sanscrit, *dama;* Greek, δόμος; Latin, *domus;* Irish, *damh;* ancient Slav, *domŭ.* The root would be *dam,* to bind (binding materials together), Pictet, ii. p. 306.

[2] Pictet, ii. p. 266, *et seq.*

[3] Ibid., ii. p. 380.

[4] Ibid., ii. p. 101, *et seq.*

[5] Sanscrit, *duhitar;* Greek θυγάτηρ; German, *Tochter;* from *duh,* to milk.

[6] *Gopa*—from *pâ tueri,* cowherd, then guardian, head of the village, lastly king. The root *pâ* gives the words pastor, father.

[7] Pictet, iii. p. 95-115.

[8] Pecus.

Weights were already in use, which implies some elementary traffic.[1]

The social organisation seems to have risen above that of the mere tribe, for we hear of a king; but the form of government was still very vague. Royalty was doubtless only an extension or generalisation of the paternal power. This nascent society knew how to protect itself against disorder; it had its system of penal justice, with judges, witnesses, and punishments.[2] The idea of the majesty of justice was expressed by an admirable word, for *law* signifies sometimes *that which is imperishable*, sometimes that which is *established* or *ordered*, proclaimed, known of all, sometimes *that which is right*.[3] Hence that sublime expression which makes the moral law the indestructible foundation of the State, the very basis of the written law and of established custom, of which it is the sole sanction. An offence is called a *transgression*, that which breaks through law.[4]

If from the social life, in which the moral idea thus asserted its supremacy, we rise to the religious life, we shall be struck with the value attached to man as an individual in the admirable psychology which may be summed up in a few words. We find the distinction already marked between the soul, the breath of life,[5] and the intellect, the thinking power, which makes man a reasonable being. Man is called distinctively *the thinker*.[6] This soul, endowed with intelligence, goes on existing after

[1] Pictet, iii. p. 115.

[2] Ibid., iii. p. 145, *et seq.*

[3] See these various designations of law: 1st *dharma*, from the root *dhr, dhar, ponere, firmiter stare;* Old Irish, *dir, justus;* 2nd From the root *dhâ, ponere;* Zend, *dâo;* in Greek, θέω, whence θέμις and θέσμος, law, right, custom, Old German, *tôm, tuom*, Scand., *dôm;* 3rd Sanserit, *Diç*, order, precept from *diç, indicare;* Greek, δίκη, justice, law; Latin, *judex*, judge; 4th *Vêda, vidyâ*, knowledge; from *vid, scire, noscere;* Goth, *vitôtht;* 5th *rgu*, right; Latin, *rego, rectus, etc.;* Goth., *raihts;* German, *recht*, Ibid., vol. iii. p. 138, *et seq.*

[4] Ibid., iii. p. 146.

[5] Sanscrit, *an*, breath; in Greek, ἄνεμος, breath; φρήν,—ενος soul; Latin, *anima;* Irish, *anail;* Ibid., iii. p. 275.

[6] Sanscrit, *manas*, intelligence; Zend, *man*, to think; Latin, *mens;* Goth., *munan*, to think, to will; Old German, *manôn*. Man is described as the thinking being. Sanscrit, *manu*. To this etymology may be traced the Greek *Minos*. In Gothic we find *man* as in German. Ibid., iii. p. 281, *et seq.*

death. Incineration was the prevailing custom; but judging from the universal practices of Indo-European nations, the funeral ceremonies were accompanied with sacrifices, the original form of which seems to have been the immolation of a cow, so that the herdsman might be able to carry on in another world his wonted occupation.[1] We find also among all nations of the Aryan race, the idea of a river to be crossed, and a conflict to be maintained with the powers of evil. The Greek Cerberus came from the plains of the Caucasus.

With regard to what may be properly called religious ideas, we must be careful not to accept unproved hypotheses. It appears certain that the primitive Aryans had altogether left behind the animistic period, in which religion consisted wholly in the exorcising of demons by sorcery. They retained, indeed, certain magic arts, but these were not regarded as of primary importance.[2] They had come to adore the stars as the highest manifestation of the deity. Had they arrived also at the intuition of a vague monotheism, leading them to recognise a supreme power in the highest heaven, as seems suggested by their mode of expression?[3] It has been thought that this might be inferred from one of their designations of the divinity as the Supreme Being. Their metaphysical bias renders this possible, but we have no means of arriving at certainty. If the negroes of the Gold Coast have been found to have the monotheistic intuition, we can feel no difficulty in admitting that a race so richly gifted as the Aryans may have possessed it, though no relics of a primitive tradition on the subject have come down to us. In any case this monotheistic intuition is but a lightning flash athwart the darkness of the night. The prevailing idea of the divinity always identifies him closely with the grandest and most striking cosmic phenomena, and primarily, therefore, with the great luminaries of the heavens

[1] Pictet, p. 233, *et seq.*
[2] Ibid., iii. p. 388.
[3] *Deva*, which according to Pictet applies to the abstract divinity, would be distinguished as a substantive from the more general word *Div*, and would stand for the Celestial One. It would correspond to the Greek Θεός, and the Latin *Deus*. Ibid., iii. p. 414.

and with the heaven itself. The word used for heaven represents to all Indo-European nations, the great mysterious power, the object of their worship. *Dyaus* is heaven personified.[1]

The Vedic Varuna, the prototype of the Greek Uranos, belongs to the same period. The sun, respresented as the centre of light under the name Sûryâ, and as the productive power under the name Savitar, is worshipped among the principal Aryan nations. All alike offer their adoration to the dawn,[2] to the earth, to the elements, fire and water, air and wind.[3] The primitive Aryans had an elementary mythology, in which it is easy to trace the pastoral and agricultural character of their lives. The clouds appeared to them as celestial cows, and the sun, the great producer of life, as the bull.[4] All the Indo-European languages agree in describing worship as a prostration of the soul in fear, veneration and love.[5] Sacrifice is its necessary expression. The idea of holiness seems derived from that of light and purity.[6]

There is only one word for faith in all these languages, and it always stands for trust and respect.[7] Its first meaning, like that of religion, is really that which unites to the divinity. Prayer is described by the same word, whether it is addressed to gods or men. It is supplication, desire, praise or complaint.[8] Sacrifice is, according to the etymology, essentially a libation.[9]

Such are the principal elements of the social and religious life of the primitive Aryans. These pastoral people were pre-eminently poets and thinkers, and they preserve these two characteristics however widely they may be scattered. We have now to follow them into the various fields of history, where each will make his own furrow, and work

[1] The Greek Ζεύς, and the Latin *Deus*, correspond to *Dyaus*.
[2] Pictet, iii. p. 438.
[3] Ibid., iii. p. 443, *et seq.*
[4] Ibid., ii. p. 87.
[5] Sanscrit, *nam*, inclinare; hence, *namas*, veneration; Zend, *nemañh*, adoration; Greek, *νέμω*; Goth., *niman*. Ibid., iii. p. 461.
[6] Zend, *asha*, purity, holiness; Greek ὅσιος. Ibid., iii. p. 467.
[7] Ibid., iii. p. 470
[8] Sanscrit, *prach*, *laudare*; Zend, *pĕrĕç*; Latin, *precor*. Ibid., p. 472.
[9] Sanscrit, *hu*, sacrificare, libare; Greek *χύω*, *χεύω*. Ibid., p. 476.

out on different lines, under the combined influence of new environments and new associations, the elemental religion brought from the common cradle of the race. We shall see under what new aspects they will come to regard that divinity of the heavens, before whom they had all bowed together in the early days of their common faith. We shall see how the Aryans of the East, by placing the deity altogether outside the visible, reduce him to a mere metaphysical idea, to an absolute so vague, that it is but a step removed from utter negation. The Aryans of the West, on the other hand, at least in the great centres of ancient civilisation, bring their god down out of the heavens, and fashion him after their own human image. But in both directions the religious evolution will be gradual and long. Let us trace it first in Eastern lands, where the two Aryan nations most nearly allied to each other soon take divergent lines.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION OF ZOROASTER.[1]

§ I.—Historical Survey.

IRAN is that vast plain which lies between the Tigris and the Indus on the one side, and the Indian Ocean and the Caspian Sea on the other. No district presents more striking contrasts than this. Vast steppes abut on fields of singular fruitfulness. A burning sun parches the ground in one spot, and at the same moment the neighbouring districts are benumbed with wintry frosts.

The Vendîdâd, the sacred book of Iran, says: "Upon the material world the fatal winters are going to fall that shall bring the fierce frost. Upon the material world the fatal winters are going to fall that shall make snowflakes thick, even an aredvî deep on the highest tops of the mountains. And all the three sorts of beasts shall perish; those that live in the wilderness, and those that live on

[1] France has had a large share in the discovery of the texts of the sacred books of Persia. Anquetil Duperron brought back from his heroic expedition to Surat, the Parsee translation of the Avesta, which he had obtained with great difficulty from the Parsees. It was very defective, for it had been made at a period when the true meaning of the Parsee language was in great part lost. Hence it was vehemently disputed, especially by William Jones. Burnouf found a Sanscrit translation of the Yasna made by the Parsees of Guzerat. By using the methods of comparative philology, he interpreted the famous cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis. There he read the names of the great Persian kings, the Achæmenides. This gave the key to their ancient sacred language. His Commentary on the Yasna is still very valuable. (See "Essais orientaux," by J. Darmestetter; "l'Orientalisme en France.") The volume on the religion of Persia, in the collection of Oriental books published under the direction of Max Müller is by Darmestetter. He introduces his translation by an admirable preface. See "Ormazd and Ahriman," by the same author. We refer the reader also to Spiegel's translation, "Die heilig. Schriften der Parsen;" Leipzig, 1852; and to the books already quoted on the history of Eastern nations.

the tops of the mountains, and those that live in the bosom of the dale, under the shelter of stables." [1]

It is especially in Bactria and Sogdiana that these strong contrasts of climate occur. Between the mountains there are fertile valleys, clothed with luxuriant vegetation; beyond these stretch limitless barren solitudes. While the stars were shining pure and serene in the clear air of Iran, the violent wind sweeping across the steppes brought mists and raised clouds of dust. The population of the two countries differed as widely as the soil and climate. On the one hand, a peaceful and industrious people gave themselves to field labour; on the other, nomad tribes led a savage and warlike life, perpetually making fierce irruptions into Iran. The inhabitants of Bactria were thus led to look upon the cold country as an accursed land given over to evil spirits. The Medes and Persians shared this vast domain between them. The former occupied the north, the latter the south-east. They had a common origin, and both had the same primitive religious conception—that namely, which predominated among the Aryans before their dispersion, and which found its most complete expression in the Rig-Veda. Persia adhered faithfully to this so long as she remained alone, and even after her subjection by the Medes, she clung to her old belief as to the last rampart of her nationality, while her powerful neighbours had already entered on a new phase of religious evolution. There is reason to suppose that direct contact with Chaldean civilisation, gave a powerful stimulus to the Medes in the path of progress.

This contact led to a great struggle which assured to the Medes for a time the hegemony of Western Asia; but it was not till they had themselves been subdued by Cyrus, that they exerted any considerable influence upon Persia through the superior cultivation of their magi, the vigilant guardians of their traditions. The religion of Iran was not, however, for a long time thoroughly accepted by the conquerors, if we may judge from the inscriptions placed by Darius and his successors upon the walls of their palaces. It would be unreasonable, of course, to expect

[1] Vendidâd, ii. 23, 24. Translated by James Darmesteter.

to find in such inscriptions anything like a complete *résumé* of a very elaborate religious system; but it is clear that while these inscriptions give the first place to the great god of Media, as creator of heaven and earth and benefactor of men, and while they make the king his *protégé* and representative, they do not attribute to him the absolute supremacy accorded to him in the Vendîdâd. They associate in his worship, Mithra, the sun-god, and but few traces of dualism are to be found in them. The State religion, therefore, long gave a larger place to polytheism than was assigned to it in the sacred books of the magi. The magi, so far from modifying their doctrine under the new influences brought to bear on them, carried it to its extreme consequences, assigning a higher and higher place to Zoroaster in their worship.

The history of the ancient empire of Persia is divided into three periods. The first, the Achæmenian era, inaugurated by Cyrus about 560 B.C. This ended with the defeat of Darius at Arbela, 331 B.C. To him we owe the inscriptions already mentioned. The Persian power was then at its zenith. Cyrus had subdued Media, Babylonia, and Lydia, and under Cambyses Egypt was conquered, but only for a short time. Under Darius the Persian power spread eastward as far as the Indus, and to the west it crossed the seas which divided it from Europe, to dash itself vainly against the Athenian galleys. From that time it confined itself within the borders of Asia, and through the genius of Darius, the son of Hystaspes (523-585), it organised for two centuries the greatest empire Asia had ever yet seen.

During this period, the king became, as in Assyria and Egypt, a very god upon earth, adored rather than obeyed, for he was the object of a devotion scarcely less than religious. We shall see that this prostration of the entire nation before the king was quite in accordance with its religious feeling. The influence of the magi, meanwhile, became more and more powerful, especially under Cambyses.

The victorious sword of Alexander inaugurated the second era, by cutting in pieces the armies of the Great King. Under the reign of the lieutenants, his immediate

successors, Persia lost more and more of her distinctive characteristics, without any compensating gain from her association with the genius of Greece, already much degenerated.

The Parthians, in 260, took possession of Persia. Their kings, who founded the dynasty of the Arsacides, reconquered the whole of Iran, but being incessantly at war with Rome, they endeavoured to diffuse throughout the country the influence of Greece, to which they themselves had completely yielded, though still remaining in many respects, sons of the Caspian deserts.

Their sway, however, was but brief, and they never struck root in Iran. Thus when they were forced to yield the dominion to princes coming from the cradle of the Persian nationality, from the very country of Cyrus, they left no abiding traces behind them. Before their departure, however, the later Arsacides had tried to win popularity by favouring the religion of the magi. Vologeses (King Valkash) even tried to search for and collect all the fragments of the Avesta. This attempt to restore the religion of the magi really succeeded under the first of the Sassanians, who began by being one of the local kings of Persia. The doctrine of Zoroaster was now actually raised to the throne. Shapur II., the contemporary of Constantine, issued the authorised edition of the Zend-Avesta. The Sassanian Empire lasted for four centuries. It had been undermined by despotism and intolerance, so that it was easily overthrown, and with the Mussulman conquest the religion of Mahomet was forcibly introduced. The Sassanides are only memorable for having handed down to us the sacred books of the religion of Zoroaster.[1]

§ II.—Basis of the Religion of Iran.[2]

At the basis of the religion of Iran, we find not only the same elementary belief as among all the primitive

[1] "The Sacred Books of the East," edited by Max Müller, vol. iv. Introduction.

[2] See Darmestetter, "Ormazd et Ahriman." M. de Harlez, ("Journal Asiatique," 1882, p. 507), has called in question the value attached by Darmestetter to the myth of the storm, and consequently, the original

Aryans before their dispersion, but also complete identity with what may be called the very foundation of the religion of the Vedas. Undoubtedly as early as the epoch of the Vedas, there is a very marked difference between the two religions, but the fundamental agreement is none the less complete. The Aryans who emigrated into Iran brought with them into their new country the same religious beliefs as were held by their brethren who remained behind, although it cannot be questioned that they quickly modified them. This seems very clear from numerous passages in their sacred books, in which we can trace as it were the vestiges of an earlier age, for they are not in harmony with the prevailing religious conception of the time to which they belong.

In both, the great divinity is the sun-god who has produced the world of light and purity. Ahura Mazda or Ormazd "is white, bright, seen afar, and his body is the greatest and fairest of all bodies. He has the sun for his eye, the rivers above for his spouses, the fire of lightning for his son; he wears the heaven as a star-spangled garment; he puts on the hard stone of heaven, he is the hardest of all gods. He dwells in the infinite luminous space, and the infinite luminous space is his place, his body."[1] The resemblance of Ormazd to the Vedic Varuna in his original form before he was spiritualised, is very striking. The Amesha Spentas, which are emanations from Ormazd, remind us of the Vedic Adityas. Mithra represents the heavenly light in both religions in their earliest form. The spiritualisation of light, by which it is invested with a moral character, is common to the primitive

identity of the religion of Iran with that of the Vedas. He considers the religion of Iran to have had much more originality in its elementary religious ideas, which he thinks were derived in the first place from the fundamental religious intuitions in the human soul, though afterwards largely modified. We are convinced, however, that the community of origin cannot be disproved. Darmestetter admits, moreover, that the religion of Iran quickly set its seal upon these elementary truths. (See his Introduction to the translation of the Vendîdâd). As to the legend of Yima, as we find it in Fargard ii. of the Vendîdâd, we admit with M. Harlez that it approaches much more nearly to the Semitic tradition of the deluge, than to the Yima of the Vedas. But the later date of this legend explains this resemblance.

[1] Vendîdâd, Introduction, pp. 58, 60.

beliefs of both peoples before their separation. The clear shining of the light is identified with purity. The day-star represents in Iran moral good in all its forms,—good thoughts, good words, good deeds. In the Vedas, the divine eyes, which are at first merely the rays of the sun, afterwards become searchers of the heart of man. Light discerns truth and is itself truth. Dualism, which is the most characteristic trait of the religion of Iran, has its root in the beliefs common to both religions. In both we find the serpent which represents the cloud, enwrapping the sun in its folds and so darkening its shining, but in the end to be overcome by the sun-god though he has been for a moment vanquished, that is to say, obscured by it. The myth of the bull (the seed of which, after the animal has been made a sacrifice, is to become the source of all fruitfulness) is common to them both. So also is the myth of the god-man, the son of the waters of heaven, who in his turn is to die before he can conquer. The bull, which in the Vedas represents cloud, is called in the Avesta, the "son of the waters." Without attempting to reduce the symbolism of the religion of the Avesta to the myth of the storm, representing the drama of nature in three acts—the coming of the light, its momentary withdrawal, and its dazzling return—it must be admitted that this plays an important part in it. We are thus carried back to the Vedic myths, in which Indra fills the first place. It is true that in Iran this myth receives a new and far higher meaning. The two religions indeed rapidly diverge, and we must now inquire what is the distinctive character of the religion of Zoroaster.[1]

§ III.—The Religion of Zoroaster.

The great Iranian god rises steadily higher and higher above his visible manifestation in the clear light of

[1] The Zend-Avesta or Book of the Law consists of the following books: 1st, the Vendîdâd in 22 chapters, a dialogue between Ahura Mazda and Zoroaster. 2nd, The Vispêrad (27 sections). 3rd, The Yasna (170 sections). These two collections are combined under the name of the Vendîdâd Sâdah. 4th, The Khorda Avesta or small Avesta, a supplementary collection of hymns. 5th, the Bundehesh, which is of later date (Fehr, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger"). The collection of the sacred books of the religion of Iran was made in the time of the early

heaven. He is primarily intellect and purity. He is adored as "Heavenly Wisdom," "the Wise One, the Wisest of the Wise." In the beginning of time he establishes the order which keeps the sun and the stars in their courses; he fixes the earth without support; he sets in motion the winds and the clouds; he gives back the beloved son to his father that he may rear him.[1]

The Ized form the militia of Ahura Mazda. The highest order of these are the Amesha Spentas, six "immortal saints." These are rather deified attributes of the supreme god than his subordinates, and divide among them the empire of the world.[2] Their very names indicate their metaphysical character; they are, in fact, good thought, excellent holiness, perfect sovereignty, divine piety, health and immortality. Ahura Mazda is not only supreme among the gods, he is the father of them all. He says, "Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, I have created as worthy of sacrifice, as worthy of glorification as I, Ahura Mazda, am myself." The friends of the dead and the guardian genii of the living are worshipped under the name of the Fervers.[3] In contrast with the supreme

Arsacides. According to the Elder Pliny ("Hist. Nat.," xxx. 6), Tiridates brother to Vologeses was one of the magi. Tacitus says he was like Vologeses himself, greatly attached to his religion ("Annal.," xx. 24), Pliny's assertion is thus confirmed; Tiridates only completed the work of the Arsacides. That the books themselves are of a much earlier date than the Arsacides is proved by the language used, which corresponds exactly to that of the inscriptions of the Achæmenian era. Pausanias alludes to the hymns sung by the magi (v. 27. 3). According to Pliny ("Hist. Nat.," xxxiii. 1, 2), Hermippus, three centuries before Christ, gave an analysis of the books of Zoroaster. What we know, moreover, of the ideas of the Persians in the time of the Achæmenides, corresponds perfectly with the contents of their sacred books (Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," 46, 47). The Iranian religion was in existence then, substantially, in the time of Alexander, at least as professed by the magi who alone possessed it in its higher form. It was as yet far from having transformed the religion of the Persians, though it exercised a very important influence upon it. In short, the original text of the Avesta is not the work of the Persians. It was written by the magi in their language and expresses their religious convictions in the time of the Achæmenides. (Darmestetter, Introduction to his translation). We take our quotations mainly from Darmestetter's translation of the Vendidâd. For the other sacred books, see Spiegel's translation.

[1] Yasna, xliii. 2.

[2] Vendidâd, Introd. lxi.

[3] Yasna, lxv. 5.

god, the god of purity and life, we have the great adversary Ahriman, who is the principle of evil, and the author of death. He has called into existence a sort of counter-creation, in which malevolent spirits seek to thwart the good genii of Ormazd. "Thus speaks Ahura Mazda, the Holy One, unto thee: I, Ahura Mazda, the maker of all good things, when I made this mansion, the beautiful, the shining seen afar, (there may I go up, there may I pass!) then the ruffian looked at me; the ruffian Angra Mainzu, the deadly, wrought by his witchcraft nine diseases, and ninety and nine hundred, and nine thousand and nine times nine thousand diseases."[1]

The army of evil is ranged in battle array against the army of good, and a tremendous conflict commences in all the spheres in the heavens, where it takes the form of storms and tempests, and upon earth where it spreads from kingdom to kingdom.[2]

The decisive conflict takes place upon the sacred soil of Iran, the part of creation best beloved by Ormazd. "The first of the good lands and countries which I, Ahura Mazda, created, was the Airyana Vaêgô by the good river Dâitza. Thereupon came Angra Mainzu, who is all death, and he counter-created by his witchcraft the serpent in the river, and winter, a work of the Daêvas."[3]

Every part of the country has its particular plague, wrought by Ahriman in opposition to Ormazd. This principle runs throughout the universe. The contest was chiefly between the principle of life and the principle of death. The best way of honouring the former was to do everything possible for the production and expansion of life, for the creation itself is a divine work. It is as the body of Ormazd. He is the maker of all good things—the beautiful, the shining.[4] Hence natural fruitfulness and growth is to be exalted as the good law of Mazda. Trees, cattle, all are under "the fair, holy blessing-spell,

[1] Vendîdâd, Fargard xxii. 2.

[2] That the conflict goes on first in the regions of the air is shown by the part assigned to fire as the son and the weapon of Ormazd. Yasna, xxxi. 19. Darmestetter, "Ormazd and Ahriman."

[3] Vendîdâd, Fargard i. 3.

[4] Ibid. xxii. 1

the friendly, holy blessing-spell, that makes the empty swell to fulness and the full to overflowing."[1] The principal object of prayer is to ask of Ormazd that this his benediction may come upon all his creatures both man and beast, since all are dependent on him for life and sustenance. Hence the worshipper prays that waters from the spring may "flow and overflow and run to the beautiful places and fields and to the pastures, even to the roots of the plants, that they may grow with a powerful growth."[2]

The father who has a large family around him, and gets rich harvests from the land, is a priest of Ormazd. The best place upon earth, next to the place where worship is offered, is the home which the worshipper has made for himself, and where he provides for his comfort, his wife, his children, and his cattle. "O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One," says the worshipper, "which is the second place where the earth feels most happy?"

Ahura Mazda answers: "It is the place whereon one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within, with cattle, with a wife, with children, and good herds within, and wherein afterwards the cattle go on thriving, holiness is thriving, fodder is thriving, the dog is thriving, the wife is thriving, the fire is thriving, and every blessing of life is thriving.[3] Again: "O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One, what is the food that fills the law of Mazda?" Ahura Mazda answered: "It is sowing corn again and again. He who sows corn, sows holiness; he makes the law of Mazda grow higher and higher.[4]

Asceticism is altogether foreign to such a conception of religion. The priest is to teach the people this holy saying: "That a man must eat that he may have strength to do works of holiness, strength to do works of husbandry, strength to beget children."[5]

The law of Zoroaster enjoins sincerity and faithfulness to the plighted word. The light of truth ought to enlighten and fill the soul as it enlightens the material

[1] Vendîdâd, xxii. 1.
[2] Zend Avesta, Part ii. Tîr Yast, xi. 42.
[3] Vendîdâd, i. 2, 3.
[4] Ibid., 30, 31.
[5] Ibid., iii. 33.

creation of Ormazd. Purity is a sacred duty, though there are no fixed laws of marriage, and polygamy is allowed.

The preservation of purity is one of the chief conditions of happiness in the future life. Unnatural crimes are severely punished as tending to sterility.[1]

Chastity is closely connected with the purification of the body according to the prescribed rites. It is declared that "purity is for man, next to life, the greatest good; that purity that is procured by the law of Mazda to him who cleanses his own self with good thoughts, words and deeds. This is the best of all things, this is the fairest of all things." And the law which provides for it is "great, good and fair above all other utterances." . . . "As much as a great stream flows swifter than a slender rivulet, so much above all other utterances in greatness, goodness, and fairness, is this law, this fiend-destroying law of Zarathrustra. As high as the great tree stands above the small plants it overshadows, so high above all other utterances in greatness, goodness and fairness, is this law, this fiend-destroying law of Zarathrustra."[2]

An important place in worship is assigned to sacrifice. The offering is intended to strengthen the divine champions engaged in the universal conflict. But the essential element in this also is the sacred and omnipotent form of words, in which the power of the deity is present to help. In its lower form, it is simply a magic formulary used to break the spells of the demons. The worshipper is directed by Ahura Mazda to say: "I drive away Angra Mainzu from this house, from this borough, from this town, from this land . . . . from the whole of the holy world."[3] Then follows an enumeration of all the evil spirits, who are to be exorcised by the repetition aloud of these fiend-smiting and most healing words: "Perish away to the regions of the north, never more to give unto death the living world of the holy spirit."[4] These sacred formularies act directly upon the gods. Prayer has a purifying effect upon both worlds, if only it be offered in accordance with the proper rites. To

[1] Vendîdâd, xviii. 4.
[2] Ibid., v. 21—24.
[3] Ibid., x. 13.
[4] Ibid., ix. 27.

glorify the lords of all beings, to exalt the holy waters, to sing sacred hymns is to counteract the power of the demons. "These are the words that smite down Angra Mainzu . . . these are the words that smite down all the Daêvas." [1] "Thou shalt chant the cleansing words and the house shall be clean; clean shall be the fire, clean the water, clean the earth, clean the cow, clean the trees, clean the faithful man and the faithful woman, clean the stars, clean the moon, clean the sun, clean the boundless light, clean all things made by Mazda, the offspring of the holy principle." [2]

This virtue attached to a liturgy has always had an injurious effect upon the religious life, tending to foster mere formalism. All merely ritual observances, however, are subordinate to a pure and high morality. "There is many a one, O holy Zarathrustra," said Ahura Mazda, "who wears a Patidâna,[3] but who has not girded his loins with the law. When such a man says, I am an Atharvan (priest), he lies; do not call him an Atharvan, holy Zarathrustra, thus said Ahura Mazda." [4]

The fire upon the altar is never to be allowed to go out, for it represents all that is pure and divine. Fire, the son of Ahura Mazda, is to be worshipped and served. In the first part of the night he calls to the master of the house for help, saying: "Up, arise thou master of the house! put on thy girdle, put on thy clothes, wash thy hands, take wood, bring it unto me, and let me burn bright with the clean wood carried by thy well washed hands." In the second part of the night he calls the husbandman; in the third, the priest. Then bedfellows address one another: Rise up, here is the cock calling me up; whichever of the two first gets up shall first enter paradise; whichever of the two shall first with well washed hands bring clean wood unto the Fire, son of Ahura Mazda, the Fire, well pleased with him and not angry, and fed as it required, will bless him.[5]

At dawn the cock, the sacred bird, lifts up his voice and says: "Arise, O men, and recite the words that smite

[1] Vendîdâd, x. 16. [2] Ibid., xi. 2.
[3] A mouth veil worn by priests or others when praying.
[4] Vendîdâd xviii. 1. [5] Ibid. xviii. 26.

down the Daêvas. For the three excellent things be never slack, namely, good thoughts, good words, and good deeds."[1]

Sacrifice occupied a place in the worship a little lower than the sacred formularies. The offering of libations (the Haoma) gives victory to the strong when it is accompanied with "the wisdom of the tongue, with the holy spells, with the words, with the deeds, and with the rightly spoken words."[2]

The Iranian priest *par excellence* is one of the magi, but all the holy race are called to take part in the offering of sacrifice. It is said: "I call to the sacrifice, the priest, the warrior, the hardworking husbandman, the master of the house, of the tribe, of the district, the young man of good thoughts, good words, good deeds, those who are married, the mistress of the house, the woman who does well, who pleases her husband."[3] The division of the world into two categories of beings, the pure and the impure, makes the causes of defilement very numerous. All contact with impurity requires cleansing. The most common cause of defilement was touching any dead body. Everything in any way connected with death brought defilement, and shut out from any share in the worship. Even the hair and nails cut off from the living body were regarded as dead matter, and supposed to fall into the possession of the demon and to become the abode of death and uncleaness.[4]

One of the most essential features of the religion of Iran is the important part assigned to man in the conflict between Ormazd and Ahriman. The first act of the great drama is enacted in the heavens, when Ahriman creates the deadly serpent. This serpent only quenches the heavenly luminary for a time, for the light always in the end breaks through the enveloping cloud. Upon earth Yima, the first man, the typal man, reigned over a happy race in a paradisaical region; but the evil being, the dark serpent led him astray. Through his lie, the primæva

[1] Vendîdâd, xviii. 26.
[2] Abân Yast, Part ii. 25. Zend Avesta p. 55.
[3] Vispersal, iii. 17—20.
[4] Vendîdâd, Introd. xvii.

race fell into sin and darkness, and under the empire of the power of evil. There was we are told no heat, no cold, no death, no evil till Yima, the first man, had listened to the lying words of the serpent. Then he fell terrified to the earth. The heavenly majesty departed from him (under the form of a bird) and passed to Mithra.[1] Yima failed a second time upon the earth in a mysterious struggle.[2]

Left to itself the unhappy race of man could not triumph over its powerful adversary. It was reserved to the most glorious of the sons of Iran to slay the three-headed serpent.[3] In fact the salvation of the privileged race inhabiting the sacred land, is the work of the really divine man who brings to it the word of truth and of deliverance. Zoroaster, who from a simple religious reformer was to rise to the rank of a divine being, passed through a great moral conflict.[4] Assailed by the Daêvas, the demons who are the soldiers of Ahriman, he encountered them with the invincible weapon of prayer. The tempter says to him, "Renounce the good law of the worshippers of Mazda, and thou shalt have such a boon as the murderer gained, the ruler of the nations."[5]

Zoroaster refuses, and prays aloud: "This I ask thee, teach me the truth, O Lord." The tempter has asked him by what weapons he will resist his creation? To which he replied: By "the sacred mortar, the sacred cup, the Haoma, the words taught by Mazda, these are my weapons, my best weapons!"[6] In fact, as soon as he

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[1] Khorda Avesta, xxxv. 7, 40. Yasma, ix. 14, 21.

[2] Khorda Avesta, xxxv. 36.

[3] Vendîdâd, xix. Khorda Avesta, xxvii. 7—40.

[4] Zoroaster or Zarathrustra, the Shining One, was born in Bactria. Having fled to the desert to escape the spectacle of evil, he brought back with him his doctrine, which owing to the patronage of the King of Bactria, quickly spread. Zoroaster is said to have been married three times. It was from the third marriage, contracted in a higher sphere, that the great deliverer was looked for to complete his work. The figure of Zoroaster was so early enveloped in the myth of his deification that it is impossible to distinguish the basis of truth in his history. It appears certain, however, that a religious reformer of the name did live (Fehr, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger").

[5] Vendîdâd, xix. 1, 6.

[6] Vendîdâd, xix., describing the temptation of Zoroaster.

uttered the holy word, the demons fled. Thus he is extolled above measure as the conqueror of the Daêvas, the mightiest and most victorious of heavenly beings.[1]

The soul of the just who keeps the law of Zoroaster, is delivered, like his master, from the evil spirits. His odyssey is beautifully described in the nineteenth Fargard of the Vendîdâd, which does not belong to the earliest period of the religion of Zoroaster. After man is dead, in the third night, as the dawn is breaking, the victorious Mithra takes his seat in dazzling light upon the summit of the mountain. Then the fiend, named Vivaresha, carries off in bonds the souls of the wicked Daêva-worshippers who live in sin. The soul enters the way made by Time, and open both to the wicked and to the righteous. At the head of the Kinvad bridge, the holy bridge made by Mazda, they ask for their spirits and souls, the reward for the worldly goods which they gave away here below.

Then comes the well-shapen, strong, and tall-formed maid, with the dogs at her sides, one who can distinguish who is graceful, who does what she wants, who is of high understanding.

She makes the soul of the righteous one go up above the Hara-berezaiti,[2] above the Kinvad bridge she places it in the presence of the heavenly gods themselves.

Uprises Vohu-manô[3] from his golden seat; Vohu-manô exclaims: "How hast thou come to us, thou holy one; from that decaying world into this undecaying one?"

"Gladly pass the souls of the righteous to the golden seat of Ahura Mazda, to the golden seat of the Amesha Spentas . . . . the abode of all the other holy beings."[4]

While the soul is raised to the abode of the shining ones, the body of the deceased is laid on some high place. It is expressly forbidden to burn it, for this would be a profanation of the most sacred element: nor may it be

[1] Yasna, ix. 43-47.
[2] The heavenly mountain whence the sun rises, and upon which the abode of the gods rests.
[3] The door keeper of paradise, a Zoroastrian St. Peter.
[4] Vendîdâd, xix. 29—32.

laid in the earth, for this also is holy, like all the creation of Ormazd.

"O maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Whither shall we bring, where shall we lay the bones of the dear one, Ahura Mazda?"

Ahura Mazda answered: "The worshippers of Mazda shall erect a building out of the reach of the dog, the fox, and of the wolf, and wherein rain-water cannot stay. Such a building shall they erect, if they can afford it, with stones, mortar and earth. If they cannot afford it, they shall lay down the dead man, on the ground, on his carpet and his pillow, clothed with the light of heaven and beholding the sun. . . ."[1]

This deliverance of individual souls is not enough to ensure the victory of the great and good god. His final triumph is to be won through the son of Zoroaster, Soshyôs, the divine combatant, who is to be born in the end of time. "Then Ahriman is to be destroyed, and humanity, the daughter of Ormazd will rise again to find paradise at length regained. The victory will be won by the word of Ormazd and obedience will become perfect.[2] The hero god, by his victorious arms, will succour all the corporeal world. "Before him all the Daêvas bow for fear and fright reluctantly and rush away to darkness."[3] He is thus addressed by his worshippers: "Unto the holy strong Sraosha (Soshyôs), who is the incarnate Word, a mighty and well-speared lord, be propitiation, with sacrifice, prayer, propitiation and glorification. We sacrifice unto the holy, tall, well-formed fiend-smiting Sraosha who makes the world increase, the holy and master of holiness. . . . The holy Sraosha, the best protector of the poor is fiend-smiting. . . . I bless the sacrifice and prayer, the strength and vigour of the holy, strong Sraosha, who is the incarnate Word, a mighty-speared and lordly god."[4] By his virtue he is to renovate the world, to free it from corruption and rottenness, and to make it ever living and

[1] Vendîdâd, vi. 49—51.

[2] Yasna lvi. is a magnificent hymn to Sraosha or Soshyôs, the divine son of Zoroaster.

[3] Zend Avesta, Part ii. Srôsh Yast Hâdhôkht, ii. 13.

[4] Ibid.

ever thriving, when the dead shall rise and immortality commence."

The opposition of the principles of light and darkness is not then eternal. The good god will bring it to an end. If this is so, are we to suppose that originally the god of evil was on the same divine level as Ormazd, and that he was thus self created? One passage in the sacred books speaks of them as twins; but have they an equal right to be? Whence come they? The later sacred books of the Persians, which have evidently been modified and added to as the result of contact with oriental civilisation, and still more through the influence of Semitic traditions, speak of one first principle, the source of all things, "which was according to divers accounts either Space, or Infinite Light, or Boundless Time, or Fate."[1] Some have attempted to trace this idea of one First Principle in the older sacred books. It was in reality a logical sequence of the high conception of the deity embodied in the whole religion of Iran. It is very difficult to reconcile that religion with the theory of the original equality of the good and evil principle, especially as in the end the latter was to be defeated. The conclusion seems obvious that the evil was essentially inferior to the good. We are much inclined therefore to admit the existence of a monotheism more or less latent in the religion of Iran. But if Ahriman proceeds from Ormazd himself, then evil again becomes eternal and forms part of the absolute, whence it follows that evil has no real existence, since it is only one of the conditions of being.

This point remains in deep obscurity. The fact however, that Zoroaster, who is also a divine being, passes through the ordeal of temptation, allows us to infer that moral freedom may be the principal cause of the distinction between various beings. Only we must not force the texts to support a theory. The fact remains that the religion of Iran, like the whole ancient world, failed to solve the great question of the origin of evil, and thus fell into that naturalistic dualism with which only

[1] See Darmestetter, "Introduction to the Vendîdâd," p. 82. Also the third part of his "Ormazd and Ahriman."

Semitic monotheism has ever been able successfully to cope. It appears to us clear however that the religion of Iran made a noble and vigorous effort to cast off this fatalistic dualism. If it could not get rid of it in the material world, it did lift up an ever-strengthening protest against it in the moral sphere, in the history of man. We find the record of temptation, conflict, victory; hence there must have been freedom of volition.

It must not be forgotten, however, that one portion of the human race remained doomed to evil and to death, as the posterity of Ahriman. Does the other portion attain, of necessity, to life and deliverance? The idea of the judgment of souls would seem to imply a recognition of the risks and the perils of free will. But on this point the religion of Zoroaster contradicts itself and has no certain utterance. The importance attached to the knowledge and repetition of certain sacred formularies, considerably restricted the sphere of moral freedom; for if salvation consisted mainly in knowing the law of the universe, it was because that law was regarded as all-powerful and inflexible. Prayer, however, was supposed to modify its application. Thus we find ourselves in a sphere outside of pure logic, and confronted with conflicting elements. This is inevitably the case with an incomplete religion.

Yet with all its incompleteness, this religion had in it sublime anticipations of truth which made it an elevating and salutary influence over the great nation professing it. It had a thirst for purity and light. It had a high idea of life, the activities and fruitful development of which it regarded as service to a god who hated death. The harvest-laden earth was his temple, and the home where the family was growing up was a sanctuary with open door to feed the poor. Existence, looked upon as a sacred conflict with the principle of evil, was invested with true greatness and serious beauty. "The monarchy of Persia," as Ranke well remarks in his "Universal History," "fulfils a high mission. It has other aims in view than mere conquest and plunder. It rises far above the cruel Assyrian monarchy. For the divinities of Iran, pure and shining ones like the hosts of heaven, demand neither

hecatombs nor rites of prostitution. They are not imitated by the destruction, but by the increase and development of life. If they make war it is not from motives of ambition, but to triumph over the powers of evil, to assure the final victory of the god of life. Assur and the goddess who for the most part is named with him (in the inscriptions of Darius), are warrior deities. Ahura Mazda is a god of justice and truth. Subjection means with the Assyrians subjugation by violence, with the Persians the fulfilment of a supreme will. That which most contributes to the elevation of Darius is that his opponent's claim was based on falsehood. The protection which Ahura Mazda lends him he traces to the fact that he is the true king before whom the kings of falsehood must needs be overthrown. This premises that the supremacy had with justice fallen to the Achæmenidæ and had been reached by the transition from the one line to the other, of which Darius, son of Hystaspes, was the representative. Thus far he is the true king, and is recognised as such by Ahura Mazda. This is the purport of the admonition addressed by Darius to his successors upon the throne, to avoid all falsehood, never to show favour to any liar or traitor; for this would be to run counter to the conception of a true monarchy. Royal authority thus obtains a moral significance to which the whole structure of the kingdom and the State must be made to conform."[1]

This conception of the monarchy is the natural consequence of the fundamental religious idea of Iran, according to which the history of nations, like that of individuals, is one long struggle of good against evil. We have already pointed out that it was one of the grand aspects of this noble religion, that it assigned to man the foremost part in the salvation of the world; for Zoroaster, although he came down from heaven, is but the glorious son of holy humanity, which is itself the very seed of Ormazd. Life is represented as essentially a victorious conflict. Thus the idea of atonement is but faintly recognised. The purification of defilements contracted by contact with impure beings, and especially with

[1] Ranke, "Universal History," p. 106.

anything connected with death, is the prominent idea, not any expiation to be made for the wrong done. Eternal happiness is primarily the recompense for vigour and success in the conflict with evil, and the great weapon in the fight is always the due recitation of holy words. Sacrifice has far more the character of homage and of an offering than of an atonement. In this aspect the religion of Iran resembles that of Egypt. It also has its intuitions, which rise above its ordinary level. The moral idea becomes expanded and quickened as it were with a feeling akin to love, raising it above the mere conflict of the principle of life against the principle of death, which is its logical summary. "Carry succour to the poor," say the sacred books. "See that he who is in want, wants no more."[1]

This recognition of charity in the moral life, brings in an element beyond the narrow scope of a formal and liturgical piety. The worshipper of Ormazd understands that it is not enough to recite correctly a sacred formulary; that beside the letter of the law, there is the spirit, a spirit of compassionate love. How else can we explain this beautiful saying: "The true worshipper of Ormazd is he who gives food to the hungry"? This conception of a higher morality and of a religion which is something more than mere formalism, must of necessity lessen the satisfaction which the worshipper of Ormazd feels in his good works, his rites and litanies. We must not attach great importance to the instruments for inflicting penance which seem to have belonged to the Mazdean worship, such as the goad and the *craoshocarana*, a sort of whip used for self-castigation, nor to the prolonged recitation of the sacred books, also by way of penance.[2] That which appears to us far more significant, is the practice of the confession of sins,—a confession including not only outward defilement, but sins of thought, word, and deed.[3]

Most of all do we attach importance to the deep consciousness the worshippers had of the inadequacy of

[1] Visparad, xviii. 4.
[2] Fehr, "Encyclopédie Lichtenberger."
[3] Khorda Avesta, xlv. 4.

the religion of Iran. Even Zoroaster himself, exalted as he was, does not seem to have been looked upon by his followers as capable of winning the final victory. They were awaiting in the future, a mysterious son of the great champion of Ormazd, a hero divine, though born of a woman, who alone would be able to complete the work begun, driving Ahriman back into the eternal darkness, and inaugurating the era of endless and unalloyed bliss. Subsequently, in the evening of the ancient world, when Mithra had become the impersonation of this delivering power, we find the recurrence with a new and deeper meaning of the idea already contained in the symbol of the storm and in that of the bull sacrificed by the god—the idea namely, that as light comes forth again victorious from the dark bosom of the tempest, so life is born again of death. The iron plunged into the heart of the bull, is the destruction of the natural life, under its most powerful image. This representation, perpetually reproduced in marble, comes to exert a simple fascination over the moribund ancient world, which by a prophetic intuition learns to regard death as the fruitful parent of new life. We know what importance the mysteries of Mithra acquired at this time, but the religion of Iran did not wait for this sombre hour of the evening of history, to call upon the god of the future. Such a call surely goes up in the sublime prayer: "O Asha, God of purity, when shall I see thee? When shall I know thee? When shall I see the abode of Ahura Mazda, the Benefactor whom Sraosha is to reveal?"[1] The unknown poet asks, "What is there better for man to know before the great deliverance comes?"[2] "May the victorious Sraosha defend us,"[3] he cries. "May there come in brightness and glory, the fulfilment for which all souls are waiting."[4]

[1] Yasna, xxviii. 1.
[2] Ibid., xxx. 2.
[3] Ibid., lvi. 10.
[4] Ibid., xxxiv.

BOOK III.

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE RELIGION OF THE VEDAS.[1]

§ I.—General Characteristics.

THE Aryans who civilised India and developed there one of the most powerful religions in the world, were the last to quit the cradle of their race. They carried with them the larger part of their patrimony, not only in their language, which presents many points of contact with the idiom of Western languages, but also in their mythology. While their brethren who emigrated to the west plunged at once into wars of conquest, those who crossed the Himalayas carried on for a long time a quiet agricultural life, favourable to contemplation and meditation. They remained for centuries in the region watered by the seven rivers of Northern India —the plain of the Indus. In these fertile valleys they

[1] I cannot pretend to give even the most rapid survey of the vast bibliography which deals with the religions of India. I may however just refer the reader to the admirable résumé given by M. A. Barth in "The Religions of India." It contains very valuable suggestions on the religious evolution itself. I have borrowed chiefly from the sacred books of India, as will be seen by the notes. Unhappily, I have only had access to them through translations. Of these a great number have appeared of late years in England, France, and Germany. I have availed myself largely of Max Müller's works: "Essays on Mythology, Traditions and Customs," on "The Science of Religion," on "The Origin and Growth of Religion, as Illustrated by the Religions of India," and "India, what can it teach us?" I am also greatly indebted to M. Bergaigne, for his book, "La religion Védique, d'après les hymnes du Rig-Veda," vol. iii. I may mention also M. Bourquin's recent work, "Le panthéisme dans les Vedas." I agree with him as to the fundamentally pantheistic character of the religion of the Vedas, but I am disposed to assign a larger place than he does to the reaction of the moral consciousness against the prevailing logical conception.

enjoyed perfect security. On the north they had the mountains for ramparts, while the Indian Ocean washed the southern frontiers of the peninsula. Thus they escaped for centuries the wars and fightings which raged among other Asiatic and Western nations. There was no parallel in their history to the sanguinary drama enacted on the shores of the Mediterranean. They easily got the better of the aborigines of Northern India. The allusions in their sacred books to these unimportant conflicts are very sober, a sure evidence that they presented no analogy with the giant combats which some branches of the Aryan race had to wage, to win for themselves a rich and glorious possession. The aborigines who were to be dispossessed and brought into subjection in India, were of an inferior race, probably mere savages. The sacred books speak of them as "The men of the black skin." "Indra," says a Vedic hymn, "protected in battle the Aryan worshipper. He subdued the lawless for Manu; he conquered the black skin."[1]

The natives were also called by their conquerors "goat-nosed and noseless," and were even taunted with feeding on human flesh. The sacred books speak of them as demons, and madmen, and devote them to the pit, even to unfathomable darkness and everlasting hatred. They are constantly contrasted with the noble Aryan race, their masters. These unhappy aborigines seemed to their conquerors an incarnation of the power of evil. They never presented any serious obstacle, however, to the invaders, who easily swept them off the ground. Hence the religion of the Aryans in this region never assumed the essentially militant form so marked elsewhere.[2]

The conflict of the good and evil principles in nature rather than in history, is the prominent feature in the religion of the Aryans in India. Living under a favourable climate, and in a fertile district not subject to volcanic eruptions, their existence was one of comparative tranquillity, exempt from the convulsions of nature or of war. Their social constitution retained for a long time its

[1] Rig Veda, i. 130, 8.
[2] Max Müller, "Essays on Mythology," p. 328.

patriarchal character, which was not favourable to the establishment of a monarchy. There was a sort of tacit federation among tribes of the same race, which were indeed only families on a larger scale. The priesthood, which was subsequently to exercise considerable power, was not yet a constituted hierarchy. The priest was primarily an inspired singer; the principal sanctuary was the home, and there the father of the family officiated. There was nothing in the institutions of the country, nor in outward circumstances, to check the play of thought and feeling in a race singularly sensitive to the majestic beauties of nature surrounding it, and marvellously gifted in interpreting its symbols by a deep and subtle mysticism. Its greatest danger lay indeed in the superabundance of its gifts, which it never knew how to use rightly.

It abandoned itself unrestrainedly to its poetical and metaphysical instincts. It is true that these were not always consistent, and its pantheistic conception of things gave to its poetry a cloudy vagueness which prevented the creation of individual and truly human types. Nevertheless, it has never been surpassed in its keen insight into the mysterious depths of things, nor in its mastery of subtle dialectics; nor have we in any literature more brilliant descriptions of nature in all her aspects of power and sweetness.

Yet even when the race was young and its early singers were pouring forth the rapture of delight wrought in their souls by the beauty of earth and sky, we catch tones of sadness in their singing, a feeling after the great unknown lying beyond and behind the veil of material things; and we know that under the influence of a latent but irresistible logic, even this brilliant nature-worship will end in the negation of all the natural and the finite. The deep line of demarcation is very early traceable between the religious development of the Aryans of Iran and those of India. The former enter into life through conflict; the latter sink into annihilation through speculation, not however without strong and impressive protests on the part of the conscience, which we shall carefully observe.

It is important to bring into strong relief this capital point of divergence between these two branches of the same

stock, for in it lies the explanation of the direction taken by each in its religious development. We have already shown that their beliefs were originally identical. Both India and Iran began with solar gods, which were, in both religions, the highest manifestation of the deity. But the great god of India, Varuna, after being raised to the highest altitudes of the moral life, and retaining this pre-eminence for an indefinite time, is finally lost in a confused theodicy in which all the gods are merged in one another. This theodicy is in its turn plunged into the abyss of the ineffable unity, the vague and dreary absolute, which is but another name for nothingness.[1] In contrast to this pantheistic evolution, the great god of Iran becomes ever increasingly the god of life, of victorious good, of fruitful effort.

How can we explain so wide a divergence of religious conception, with a community of origin so complete? The explanation is simply this: that Iran, in its conception of the divine, gave precedence to the moral idea (largely tinctured indeed with naturism, but retaining that which was essential) over the mere metaphysical notion of the absolute. When the absolute, the divine, is regarded primarily as moral good, its highest impersonation cannot be a god bent on destroying and annihilating the finite being. Man may never pass the limits of the finite, but he is not on that account excluded from true life and cut off from the divine. So long as he does good and fights the good fight, he has as much his *raison d'être* as all the rest of the created world. Under such conditions religion tends to life, not to death. It is quite otherwise when the dominant idea of the divine, or of absolute being, is the infinite. Evil then of necessity resides in the finite, in the particular, individual being. It follows that the chief duty of the individual is to try to attenuate this limited life, to weaken it by asceticism, and finally to suppress it altogether: this is the radical principle of the metaphysics of India from its very earliest phases. It is at first hidden by the luxurious overgrowth of natural symbols unequalled in their wealth and brilliancy. Sometimes the conscience awakes and attempts to recast the

[1] See Book I., § 2, ch. v.

image of its gods, and to raise them to its own elevation. But the prevailing idea is that of a boundless pantheism, in which the gods are confounded with the operations of nature and lose all true and permanent individuality. They are nothing more than the changing forms of one substance, one force, one principle, asserting itself through different media and in various ways. All these manifestations—fire, water, lightning—assume in turn the character of the supreme deity who sometimes absorbs them altogether. This supreme deity becomes a Proteus, for ever changing his name and nature, at once everywhere and nowhere. "That which is One the wise call it in divers manners," says the Rig Veda.[1] And again: "Wise poets make the beautiful-winged, though he is one, manifold by words."[2]

There was undoubtedly a long period in which poetry was more powerful than metaphysics, and the religious feeling with its deep cravings and aspirations, projected itself upon all the gods, asking them to satisfy its yearning after the infinite, which at times assumed the form of a longing for pardon and restoration, an earnest endeavour after moral good. It cannot be questioned that the religion of the Vedas was thus raised above itself by the higher and purer development of the worship of Varuna. Nevertheless it carries within it the germ of its own dissolution in the element of pure metaphysics, which after being for a while held in check by the stronger poetic instinct, finally rends this enchanting veil of poesy in its attempt to grasp the ineffable, mysteriously underlying all things—that lifeless absolute in which all life is ultimately to be engulfed; for it is not the good but simply the infinite, with which the finite is to be united by absorption.

The later Vedic hymns are full of this mournful pantheism. It casts a dark cloud over the brightest creations of the poetic imagination, deepens the night of doubt, and prepares the way for the triumph of a god, till now obscure, *Brahmanaspati*, who becomes the great divinity of an encroaching and tyrannical priesthood.

[1] Rig Veda i. 164, 46. [2] Ibid., x. 114, 5.

He is confounded in the end with the mysterious first principle of finite beings, who only produced them for a day to absorb them again into his silent depths, like the foam-crest of the waves, raised for a moment by the breath of ocean, only to sink back and disappear in its mighty depths.

The religion of the Brahmans is therefore the logical sequence of that of the Vedic poets; for these did not set before their followers a living personal god, like Ormazd, who should lead them on into the abode of life and goodness. In the religion of India there is no scope for anything like real conflict, since such conflict would imply the development of individuality, of a personal life, in opposition to the supreme One, who is to be the end as he is the beginning of all things. Thus Brahmanism, with its asceticism and its doctrine of the absorption of the finite in the infinite, is only a stage in the evolution of thought in India. Buddhism, in preaching the gospel of annihilation, is the logical conclusion of the religious conception of India, as implied even in the religion of the Vedas and definitely formulated in that of the Brahmans, not to mention its expansion in the elaborate philosophical treatises of the same period.

We do not forget that the moral history of a nation is not worked out like a problem in geometry; that it is complex as life itself, and that during long ages the hidden principle which was in the end to permeate all the religion of India, was more or less neutralised either by the rich creations of the national imagination, or by the persistence of the deeper needs of the soul and the conscience, ever seeking satisfaction above and beyond pantheistic theories. These happy anomalies, which are the safeguards of the moral life of humanity in its darkest days, were never more pronounced than in the first period of the religion of India, to which we now turn our attention. After the period of the Vedas, we shall pass on to that of the Brahmans. The third period is simply a history of Buddhism, which, not content with its millions of worshippers of the old type, tries to renew its youth, and under another form to gain a footing in the West.

§ II.—The Three Phases of the Religion of the Vedas.

In reviewing the history of ideas in India, we can make no attempt at chronological arrangement. We must content ourselves with the three great periods—Vedism, Brahmanism, and Buddhism. It would be simply chimerical to try to determine dates or well marked gradations in the religious evolution of these three periods, each of which comprises centuries. How can we know with any certainty the precise moment when a new religious conception arose, since no new god arose with it on the horizon? It exerted a reflex influence upon all the gods of the past and upon all these at once, through the invariable tendency of the Indian mind to attach all that is divine to each one of its deities. This is what Max Müller calls *Cathenotheism*,[1] that is "a worship of one god after another." We do not deny that a certain preponderance may be attached at a given moment to one or other of these gods, or rather to the particular religious idea which he represents, but none the less he will be speedily involved again in a syncretism all the other gods, who will immediately assume the very character which had seemed to belong peculiarly to him, just because for the time he was prominent. We must always bear this in mind in studying the pantheon of India, if we would not introduce elements foreign to it.

In the Vedic period, we observe first a phase in which the worship of the sun seems to occupy the principal place, as in all the ancient religions.[2] In many hymns

[1] "India," Max Müller, p. 147.

[2] My principal authority is the collection of Vedic hymns. I refer the reader to the complete translation by König. "Der Rig Veda oder die heiligen Hymnen der Brahmanen." Alfred Ludwig, 2 vols. Prague, 1876. The Vedas (Veda means knowledge) in their present form are divided into four parts: 1st, The *Rig Veda*, or collection of hymns; 2nd, The *Yajur Veda*, which contains the sacrificial formulas; 3rd, The *Sama Veda*, the music of the hymnary; 4th, The *Atharva Veda*, a collection of hymns of different periods. Each Veda is followed as a rule by a number of Brahmanas, treatises of ritual and theology, with legendary accompaniments. The various texts of the Vedas are called *Sakhas*, or branches. The whole series of these sacred books is called *Srutis*,

Varuna is prominent among the sidereal deities. The stars which form his train are the objects of a worship similar to that offered to them throughout the ancient East. Though his primacy is thus repeatedly affirmed, other gods claim the same rank in other hymns. Agni, the god of fire, and Soma the god of the drink of immortality, or of the sacred libations, eclipse all the other divinities, when they appear. And yet, as soon as Indra makes his thunder heard, it seems as if he alone is the supreme god, till Varuna reappearing with new attributes, rises suddenly above the sidereal symbolism, and exalts to the heavens the purest moral ideal. There is no real succession, however, in the divine sovereignty, for there is not one of these supreme gods whose attributes do not pass by turns to each of the others, and even to those who originally represented religious conceptions of a lower order, as for example, the sun and stars. This blending of all the gods is distinctive of the religion of India during the whole period of the Vedas. Each particular god is in turn the salient figure in the theogony. There may have been no doubt a degree of development in the general religious conceptions connected specially with certain gods, before these were extended to all the rest. It is not possible to fix the date when a new phase began in the development of the religion of the Vedas, but there are clear traces of such an evolution. We have indicated its principal characteristics. After the solar gods come the gods of the sacrifices. Then the god of the storm and the battle of the elements becomes pre-eminent, and again his glory pales before that of the moral god, as he triumphs for a time over the inveterate pantheism of India. We cannot look upon each of these phases as absolutely distinct.

revelation, the holy tradition. The oldest part of the Vedas is the Rig Veda. The ten books which compose it had not all a common origin; they came from priestly families often at variance with one another; thus great differences may be observed between them. All these differences are effaced in the Brahmanas, the more recent part of which belong to the fifth century before Christ. It follows that a complete religious revolution had been accomplished between the Rig-Veda and the Brahmanas. It must have extended over many centuries. There can be little doubt that the formation of the Rig Veda may be roughly assigned to the tenth century B.C., but it is impossible to affix dates to its successive stages.

There can be no sharp lines of demarcation between them. We shall rather contemplate the Vedic pantheon as one vast edifice reared by successive stages, all its parts being connected and interdependent.

§ III.—The Solar Gods.

We have observed that the genius of the Aryans of India is characterised by brilliancy of imagination and a subtle philosophic spirit.

We may naturally suppose that the poetic element predominated in the youth of the race, at the period when the worship of the sidereal gods was still in its primitive simplicity and not overladen with abstruse and complicated philosophies. Never were the aspects of nature expressed in more marvellous poetic diction or painted in more glowing colours. Nature was admired for its own sake. The images by which the Vedic poets try to set forth its beauty are indeed borrowed from the life of the warrior and the husbandman, but they content themselves with a very simple and wholly metaphoric anthropomorphism. If they introduce the law of the sexes into their theodicy, it is only to express the relation of cause and effect in the life of the world. Nor is there any fixity in these celestial marriages. Incest is admitted without scruple, because from the standpoint of Indian syncretism there is no marked difference between the gods, who are by turns father and son, male and female, cause and effect, in the perpetual changes in their mode of existence.

These sexual relations moreover have no element of sensuality; they are mere abstractions and generalisations. The nature-gods of the Indian theodicy do not resemble in the slightest degree the Astarte of Babylonia and Phœnicia, who enkindled in the heart of man the impure flame of consuming desire, made him drink deep of the cup of her voluptuousness, and was worshipped by degrading rites. The nature-goddess whom the Indian celebrates in song is not the great prostitute of Western Asia, who so excites her worshipper by her sensuous charms, that he cannot rise to the calm contemplation of the beautiful, for whom he devises only monstrous

symbols, and who never inspires him with the true poetry of worship.

To the Aryans of India nature is a chaste goddess, with star-crowned brow, of grave majesty and radiant smile, full of grace and grandeur in her changing manifestations. He feels the spell she weaves around him in the high and shining heavens, in the rapid rivers, in the vast plains and forest-sanctuaries. But the sentiment she thus inspires, has in it nothing of the ardent passion which stifles imagination and deadens thought by the very violence of sensation. His æsthetic sense is only stirred to quick expression, and he describes the goddess nature with a delicate appreciation unapproached before or since. Later on, as the soul of man becomes more agitated with the moral conflict, he seeks in nature the reflex or echo of his own changing impressions. This interpretation has a value of its own, but for the rendering of nature in all her varied aspects, nothing can equal the clear mirror of a simple heart, in the infancy of a race singularly endowed with the power of reproducing what it sees and admires in the world around it.

The magic of this poetry is peculiarly felt in the hymns addressed to the solar gods, who after occupying the foremost rank, are suddenly changed into mere satellites of Indra and Varuna, except when they are confounded with these great gods. They had, however, first their time of supremacy. The most significant trace of this period in the Vedic hymns is the name *Dyaus*, by which the heaven-god was at first designated. He forms, with the earth, the primeval divine pair from which spring all the other gods.[1] If this priority of the solar gods was not steadily maintained, they yet lost nothing of their prestige. The various phases of the rising of the sun are described in colours of surpassing delicacy and brilliance.

The dawn as it rises on the dim horizon is called Ushas, the daughter of heaven. She rides forth on her resplendent car of light, the birds forming her retinue. The breath of life for all beings is in her when she opens the gates of day. Her rays flow forth like rivers of milk

[1] Rig Veda, i. 185, 6.

from the "superb abundance" of her breast; she is as one fresh come forth from the bath.[1]

The dawn is heralded by two Asvins who represent the two first beams of day. They are the heavenly physicians bringing succour, the two eyes by which we see the light, the two feet by which we walk, the two lips whence flow words sweet as honey. Their golden chariot, swifter than thought, is wrought of rays of light. Their fleet-footed horses never weary. They are two heroes, who, mounted on their sun-car, traverse deserts, floods and fields.[2]

The great king of the realms of light, thus heralded by Ushas and the Asvins, at length appears. This is Sûrya, "the shining one," who is the joy of heaven. In Rig Veda, vii. 63, we read:—

> "The sun rises, the bliss-bestowing, the all-seeing,
> The same for all men;
> The eye of Mitra and Varuna,
> The god who has rolled up darkness like a skin."

And again, vii. 63, 4:—

> "The brilliant (sun) rises from the sky, wide shining,
> Going forth to his distant work, full of light.
> Now let men also, enlivened by the sun,
> Go to their places and to their work."[3]

The stars of night flee before the all-seeing sun like thieves. As the bridegroom to his bride, so comes Sûrya to Ushas the shining goddess.[4]

It is strange to find night invoked as the sister of the dawn; but we must remember that this is the splendid night of the East, radiant with the light of stars. It is said of night: "The immortal goddess fills the valleys and the heights around, and with her brightness puts the dark to flight. She is sister to the dawn. Be with us, thou at whose approach we have come home as birds to their nests. Man has come home, and every creature that has feet or wings. The flocks are in the fold. O guardian daughter of heaven, keep thou away the thief, the prowling wolf."[5]

[1] Rig Veda, i. 48; v. 80.
[2] Ibid., ii. 39.
[3] "Origin and Growth of Religion," Max Müller, p. 266.
[4] Rig Veda, vii. 63; vii. 66; i. 121.
[5] Ibid., x. 127.

These solar gods come in the end to share in the moral qualities of the higher divinities, with whom they are indeed closely associated in the morning prayer. In the first instance, the regularity of the appearance of the heavenly bodies suggests the idea of rule, of order and law, which afterwards assumes so beautiful a development. Of the goddess Ushas it is said: "She has ever shone without beginning; she has shone to-day; she will shine in all the days to come—unchanging, never-dying. The last to pass away, the first to rise, she shines, goddess of dawn."[1]

The same fixed and invariable order is ascribed to all the other gods of light, who constitute in fact the whole pantheon of India. "They uphold the heavenly spheres; they are golden, bright, clear as the streams of water; they slumber not nor sleep, keeping inviolate guard over pious mortals." This homage of all created orders is paid not only to Mitra and Varuna, but to the great god over all, whose eyes are in every place.[2]

Nor is the steady maintenance of law the only higher quality attributed to these shining gods. By the very fact that they are gods of light, they see all things and take special cognisance of the ways of man. In this we note the transition from the merely phenomenal in nature, to intellectual and moral action. Light does not simply illumine, it sees and sees intelligently. "With what an eye of flame, O Varuna, O sun god, the all-seeing, dost thou behold the busy ways of men!"[3] These gods of light who see all and who uphold the stedfast order of the universe, have their place in the love and trust of men who put up to them prayers of the same order as those addressed to Indra or Varuna. They naturally ask in the first place for material good. They implore Ushas to drive away and destroy the enemy and to give them milch kine.[4] They ask Sûrya to chase away all illness and bad dreams. But prayer soon rises to higher levels. The Asvins are entreated to give to their worshippers the courage of heroes.[5] Even better blessings are asked as though the suppliants recognised in the gods succouring

[1] Rig Veda, ii. 27.
[2] Ibid., i. 129; i. 150.
[3] Ibid., i. 50, 6.
[4] Ibid., vi. 64, 5.
[5] Ibid., viii. 5.

friends. "Men call you, O faithful ones, the good physicians, who lend your aid to all the blind, the feeble and depressed. I pray you now, hear my cry and be gentle to me as parents to a child. I am an orphan—I have neither friend nor kindred; help ye me, who am so poor and needy."[1] Rising still higher, the prayer addressed to these light-gods asks pardon for sins committed: "Be favourable to us, O Ushas, according to thy wont."[2] "Lengthen out our life and wipe out all wrong. Destroy the enemy and be near us with thy grace and favour."[3]

The note of penitence is even more distinct in one of the hymns of Savitar, "the vivifying one," another impersonation of the sun. The worshippers of this sun-god, who morning by morning with the touch of his finger, wakens the circle of the earth to life and light, thus pray to him: "Whatever we have committed against the heavenly host through thoughtlessness, through weakness, through pride, through our human nature, let us be guiltless here, O Savitar, before gods and men."[4]

Vishnu, the god of the solar disc, who is so prominent a figure in the later theogony, and Pûshan, "he who makes all things grow," the tutelary god of the husbandman and the shepherd, are both also sun-gods. They have the same moral attributes as Sûrya and Savitar. It is even said of Pûshan, that he leads the dead into the abodes of the blessed.[5] Thus little by little, the sun-gods are invested with moral attributes. Light becomes in them intelligence, the knowledge of men and things. The regularity of their appearance is translated into the wisdom, by which the order of the universe is maintained.

Lastly, the qualities of purity and mercy are ascribed to them. They are invoked in the same manner as the great gods, in whom these high attributes will always shine with a fuller lustre, in proportion as they are more removed from the merely phenomenal in nature. It is true that it is to the religious development manifested by the worship of these greater gods, that the inferior and earlier divinities owe their transfiguration. But on the

[1] Rig Veda, x. 39, 3—6.
[2] Ibid., iv. 52, 6.
[3] Ibid., i. 157, 4.
[4] Ibid., iv. 54, 3.
[5] Ibid., x. 17.

other hand, the great gods are never wholly emancipated from the materialism of the lower deities. This is an inevitable consequence of the pantheistic syncretism, which has always characterised the religion of India.

§ IV.—The Gods of the Sacrifices.[1]

We come now to a cycle of gods which are the most original creations of the Vedic religion—the two great gods of the sacrifices—Agni and Soma—the god of the sacred fire, and the god of the drink of immortality or of sacred libations. We shall see them rising gradually to a position of supremacy over the whole cosmogony, but at this elevation they lose their individuality, and become confounded with all the other gods. It is like one of those inaccessible peaks of the Alps, where all the lines previously divergent, meet in a single point. In spite of this logical confusion, however, they retain their moral characteristics and continue to act as benefactors to the world. The brilliant imagination of the race finds full scope in the description of the natural phenomenon, which rapidly acquires a mystical meaning.

Agni is in the first instance the fire on the hearth and on the altar. Though it leaps heavenward toward the assembly of the gods, it is nevertheless produced originally from the tinder. With his quick glancing tongue, Agni tastes the sweetness of the sacrifice. He clothes himself in a garb of flame, his golden hair floats on the breeze. He is like a winged dragon, swift as the wind. After quivering like a golden bird upon the hearth, he darts forth into space like a rapid courser, who champs the bit and cannot be held in.[2] For mortals who bring him wood for the altar and pour out libations for him, he acts as priest, bearing their messages, presenting their sacrifices. He is the mediator between gods and men. Prayers, hymns, of highest praise are due to Agni, who not only promises great things for his worshippers, but does them.[3]

[1] See Bergaigne, "La religion Védique d'après les hymnes du Rig Veda."

[2] Rig Veda, viii. 60; vi. 3; v. 9.

[3] Ibid., x. 91, 11, 12.

Agni is always associated in the Vedas with Soma, who is the second god of the sacrifice. He personifies the sacred libations. His earthly origin is as humble as that of Agni. He is nothing else but the juice distilled from plants which are the locks of the mountain. After the juice is expressed, it is passed through a sieve and then poured into wooden cups and mixed with water, clotted milk and ground corn.[1] Thus prepared it becomes the drink of immortality. Soma performs upon earth the same office as Agni.

Under the same unpretending material form, both conceal their supreme glory. Before they came into being on the hearth and in the press under the hands of men, they had each a divine history. There was something in them far higher than the spark produced by the fretting of the stones, or the juice dropping from the press. They represented two great elements of nature—the essential fire which runs in some sort through the veins of all that live, and the humid element. These two great elements, fire and water, not only permeate the world, they come down from heaven, where they existed from all eternity. The terrestrial Soma came down from heaven no less than Agni. Born on high, he has come to live on earth.[2] He enters with the rain into the life of plants,[3] he is present in the three regions of the universe.[4] Thus the holy libation is poured out three times a day. Agni belongs in the same manner to the three spheres. He was born the first time in heaven, the second time on earth, and the third time in the clouds, whence he darts forth as the lightning.[5] In fact he is not only confounded with the lightning, but with the splendour of the sun. In a hymn to Agni we find: "He whose power even the heavens admire, clothes himself in light, like the sun. Like the sun, O Agni, thou hast girdled the worlds with thy bright beams. At thy shining, darkness fled away."[6]

Thus this fire which, under the eyes of man, consumes the wood on his hearth and licks up his sacrifices is a great

[1] Rig Veda, v. 4; ix. 78; ix. 7, 2.
[2] Ibid., ix. 66, 28.
[3] Ibid., ix. 61, 10.
[4] Ibid., i. 91, 4.
[5] Ibid., x. 45, 1.
[6] Ibid., vi. 4, 3, 6.

god, an immortal among mortals. On this, his celestial side, Agni is confounded with the great gods. "O Agni," it is said to him, "thou art Varuna, thou art Mitra, all the gods are in thy flame. Thou art Indra to him who pours libations." Nor does Soma preserve a more distinct individuality than Agni. He also is put on the same level as the sun,[1] and is thus admitted into the great divine unity in which all seeming differences vanish. Both Agni and Soma are in truth only one and the same cosmical element under two forms, and are consequently one and the same god. The lightning, which is Agni, comes forth from the atmospheric vapour, which is Soma. Thus it is said of Soma that he burns and shines like fire.[2] When the big thunder-clouds are rent by the lightnings, he comes down in the life-quickening form of rain.[3] The humid element which he communicates to all plant-life, has in it a heart of fire. Wood is made to burn by the hand of man. Thus Agni and Soma are in essence one. Hence it is said of Agni as of Soma, that he is diffused in all plants, of which he is the divine fœtus. "He dwells victorious in the woods, the friend of man; he grows up with power in plants, in nations, in the breasts of mothers; the waters know him; he dwells in the house of the wise."[4] Thus both elements of the sacrifice are deified, identified with each other, and confounded with the supreme god, who after having made the world, sustains universal life.

This apotheosis of the two chief elements of sacrifice, suggests the special significance that comes to be attached to them in the religion of the Vedas. The first consequence of this absolute deification of Agni and Soma is that they are at once the objects and the substance of the sacrifice. Sacrifice is presented to the gods by offering them to themselves. Again, the victim being confounded with the great god, is not passive in the sacrifice. It presents itself a victim. The sacrifice and the priest cannot be distinguished from one another. The truth is that the life of the world, which is a divine life, is only one great, never ending sacrifice, which the gods are offering

[1] Rig Veda, viii. 3, 20.
[2] Ibid., ix. 101.
[3] Ibid., ix. 55, 1.
[4] Ibid., i. 67.

to themselves.[1] Agni is the divinely appointed priest of the gods;[2] but all the gods share in the same office.

Agni was begotten in heaven by the heavenly music of the gods, that he should fill the earth with power. They gave him a triple form, and one of his manifestations was terrestrial fire.[3] Hence it follows that the life of the universe is nothing else than a sacrifice. The light which fills the heavens is the eternal offering of the immortal Agni. The water which flows through the three worlds, is the unending sacrifice of the celestial Soma. And as all the gods, regarded under this aspect, blend in these two cosmical deities, the divine life, like the life of the world, is the ceaseless celebration of a universal worship, having for its sacred hymns the sublime crash of the thunder, and for its altar-flames the burning rays of the sun and the lightning flashes rending the clouds. "Both worlds trembled," it is said, "when the sacrifice of the storm was offered."

Worship upon earth is only the repetition of the heavenly worship. "The gods have made the heavenly sacrifice and have taught it to men." The sacred fire which consumes the victim, and the sacred water which moistens it, feed the life of the heavenly gods by restoring to them that which they have poured out upon the earth, and which returns in a manner to its source, to be incessantly renewed. Thus the life of the world is one perpetual cycle; it is poured forth from the bosom of the gods only to return to them again. They sacrifice themselves in the rich gift of life, and creation in its turn, sacrifices to them in the life laid upon the altar. Thus the sacrifice from below is the response to the sacrifice from above, and as god is in everything and everything is god, both sacrifice and sacrificer are essentially one with the supreme being. It is said that he sacrifices himself to produce all that exists.

Man thus enters into the great divine unity. He is a son of the gods by virtue of the principle of universal life which flows in his veins—that hidden fire which the rain infuses into the plant, and which is in truth the glorious Agni, who after emerging from the waters, kindles

[1] Rig Veda, x. 109. [2] Ibid., x. 109, 3. [3] Ibid., x. 88.

the flame upon hearth and altar. "Think, O ye gods," sings the Vedic poet, "how near akin we are to you. We share our common brotherhood, O bounteous ones, even in our mother's womb,"[1] that is, in the bosom of the cloud. In other words, we proceed, like you, from the humid element whence life comes forth with the lightning's flash. Men are begotten of Agni; he is their first father.[2] They are priests like him.[3] He is the Brahman *par excellence.* Thus the ancestors of the race, the glorious *Rishis,* heads of the priestly families, of whom it is said that they are born of the gods, bear names which may be applied to Agni. The names of Angiras, of Brighu (the lightning), of Vasishtha, of Manu (the thinker), by which the human priests are designated, are also applied to Agni in several stanzas of the Vedas.[4] This identification of the priest with Agni comes out clearly in many passages already quoted.[5]

As the earthly sacrifice is the reproduction of the heavenly, and possesses real virtue to nourish the gods with their own proper substance, we can understand what importance is attached to its regular and due performance. In the first prayer, the officiating priest asks the gods not to suffer him to stray from the true path of sacrifice. The beneficial effect of the sacrifice upon the gods comes out in the following hymn: "The gods appointed first the lovely song, then Agni, then the libation. He became the sacrifice that guards the body; him earth, heaven and the waters know."[6] By virtue of their sacrifice, the forefathers of the race drew out from the rock-caves where they were imprisoned, the cows of dawn, the good milch kine, who flood the earth with light."[7] "To thee, O god Agni, we burn the clear undying flame, that its brightness may reach thee in the heaven and streams of light may come down upon the singers."[8] The celestial heroes join to kindle the fire of the sacrifice when men lovingly offer it. "The man prospers who devoutly worships Agni."[9] A like virtue is ascribed to the sacrifice of the Soma (libation).[10]

[1] Rig Veda, viii. 72, 8.
[2] Ibid., i. 96; ii. 101.
[3] Ibid., iii. 1.
[4] Bergaigne, vol. i. p. 47.
[5] Rig Veda, viii. 43, 14.
[6] Ibid., x. 88, 8.
[7] Ibid., iv. 1, 13.
[8] Ibid., v. 6, 4.
[9] Ibid., vi. 2, 3.
[10] Bergaigne, i. p. 202.

The offering itself is deified. We have already seen how prayer, the repetition of holy words, is repeatedly mentioned as one of the most important parts of the sacrifice. Prayer is a divinity like Agni and Soma. It has, like them, its dwelling in heaven. The cloud prays while it thunders, for it utters a powerful word of blessing. The reverberation of the sea, which is the very voice of Soma, is a holy hymn.[1] In rising from earth to heaven, prayer, like Agni and Soma, is returning to its own place. Sacred hymns are the echo of the songs of the immortals.[2] The power of prayer is unbounded. It is like a winged dart to strike down the evil spirits. It acts upon the rising of the sun, and upon the storm. Prayers unlock the mountain where the dawn lies hidden, and bring down the rain from heaven.[3] All this shows that prayer is itself a god identical with the greatest. Brahmanaspati is the "lord of spells or of prayer."[4] A priest himself, he is the god of the priests, and his importance grows with theirs. Identified with the dawn, he reigns over three worlds.[5] The Vedas anticipate his coming glory, for one hymn calls him already, "The divinest of the host of gods."[6]

We have but scanty information as to the mode of worship in the period of the Vedas. The priest at that time practised none of the rigid asceticism, which he afterwards came to regard as the highest degree of perfection. Worship then consisted essentially of sacrifice accompanied by the invocations which form the basis of the Vedic hymns. The offerings consisting of melted butter, clotted milk, rice cakes, and sacred libations, were thrown into the fire; it was thought that the gods consumed them. There was a deep hidden meaning in these rites, the milk and butter pointing to the celestial streams from which Agni emerged. The libations were repeated three times a day to represent the three kingdoms over which Soma and Agni reigned. Bulls, cows, buffaloes and rams were sacrificed to the gods. The sacrifice

[1] Rig Veda, x. 14, 1.
[2] Ibid., x. 144, 1.
[3] Ibid., ii. 23 1.
[4] Ibid., v. 45, 1.
[5] Ibid., iv. 50, 1.
[6] Ibid., ii. 24, 3, 11.

of the horse *Asvamedha*, was of special significance; it was likened to Agni and Soma. In the worship of the Vedas, there were no idols nor sanctuaries properly so called. The real altar was the family hearth.[1]

The cosmical aspect of the sacrifice was doubtless forgotten by most of those who offered it. They had an idea that sacrifice had some magical efficacy to secure good gifts from the gods, and often regarded it too much as a mere bargain. We are quite prepared, however, to admit that the idea of sacrifice may have sometimes risen higher, and that in some of those flashes of moral truth which now and again illumined this pantheistic religion, conscience may have associated with it some thought of reparation for wrong done.

Faith in immortality is categorically expressed in the Vedas, as we gather from such words as these: "May we, like the ripe fruit from the bough, be loosed from death but not from immortality."[2] "In dying we go to the gods."[3] This belief in a future life was closely connected with the cosmical theodicy of which Agni and Soma formed the centre. We have seen that the essential vital element in man is the fire which itself comes down from heaven. It is natural that it should return to its source. The terrestrial Agni must be re-united to the celestial Agni whence he emanated, as the flame of the altar bears the offering which it has consumed, upward to the abode of the gods.[4] The Vedas regard the heavens as the sphere of the other and higher life, as is shown by such expressions as these: "May we arrive at the abode of the bull, of abundant fruitfulness!"[5] "May I attain to the blessed abode where pious men rejoice!"

It was because of this assimilation of the dead to the sacrificial fire rising heavenward, that cremation was soon substituted for burial. The belief in immortality was however definitely expressed before the change in the funeral rites. "Go," it was said to the buried dead, "go

[1] Barth, "Religion of India."
[2] Rig Veda, vii. 59, 12.
[3] Ibid., i. 125, 8.
[4] Ibid., x. 1, 6, 7.
[5] Ibid., x. 40, 11.

to the bosom of our mother earth. She opens her arms to receive thee in her kind embrace. Softly she wraps her covering round thee. Beneath her sheltering roof is food and safety."[1] Cremation became a vivid symbol of the life beyond the grave, the conception of which was to a great extent materialistic, for the flame from the funeral pyre was supposed really to carry the soul to heaven. "The daring god who rejoices in the glowing fire, shall not catch thee in his grip to burn thee,"[2] it is said to the dead man. The dead go to inhabit the luminous abodes of Agni in the sun, and thenceforward the three worlds are open to them as to him. Yama is the king of the blessed.[3] "Unite thyself to Yama, and the fathers," it is said to the dead man, "and thou shalt find every wish fulfilled in highest heaven."[4]

Yama is the son of Vivasvat, the shining one, who is often likened to Agni as priest. Manu is another Yama, and like him head of the human race and son of Vivasvat.

We see how indefinite are these relations of father and son in the Vedas. Manu and Yama are both sometimes confounded with Vivasvat, which is another name for Agni,[5] and therefore a solar god. Yama is the first man, and the first to die. He represents the divine fire which only descends from heaven to return thither again. Around him are the fathers of the Aryans, the celestial priests, leading a life of blessedness under the shade of spreading branches. They possess the divine essence and are ever fulfilling the divine law. This they do, not only in the celestial regions, but on the earth also. They are honoured under the name of Pitris. Foremost in their shining ranks are the Atharvans and the Angiras, the divine singers of old. They receive the sacrifices of their descendants,[6] but no clear idea is conveyed of their mode of life in their divine abode. Like Agni, they come down to earth in the person of their descendants, to be again caught up to heaven with the immortal fire. The doctrine of metempsychosis is however quite undeveloped in this phase of the religion of India.

[1] Rig Veda, x. 18. 10—13.
[2] Ibid., x. 16, 7.
[3] Ibid., x. 16, 9.
[4] Ibid., x. 14, 8.
[5] Bergaigne, vol. i. pp. 87—89.
[6] Rig Veda, x. 154, 1.

Very little is said about the judgment of the wicked. It seems that the two fierce dogs which accompany Yama, are designed to guard the entrance of heaven against them, but there remains a thick veil over this aspect of the final judgment. This is scarcely to be wondered at, for in spite of occasional flashes of higher truth, the moral idea is really alien to the worship of Agni and Soma.

There is no true recognition of it till the worship of Varuna has become fully developed, and we have no data to determine precisely when this was. It is certain that as long as the religious conception attached to the gods of the sacrifices prevailed, the moral idea was stifled by the cosmical. The natural life was completely identified with the divine which embraced the universe in one vast cycle. In Soma it appears as floods of water streaming from an inexhaustible source to return thither again. In Agni there is the same complete cycle of fire. The sacrifice of the gods is the continuous production of this life of the world, which returns to its source in the sacrifice offered upon earth. That which is true of universal life is true also of the individual. Man is a microcosm; his history reproduces the history of the world. His immortality is only the return to the celestial fire of the divine spark, which animated him for an instant here below. It follows that the worship of the Vedas at the time of the adoration of Agni and Soma, was only the faithful symbolic expression of a grand pantheism, the ultimate development of which would be the worship of the divine unity underlying the contingent and the transitory.

In spite of the morbid influence of the prevailing naturism, some of the Vedic hymns addressed to the gods of the sacrifices, rise abruptly to the purest heights of moral consciousness. The poet seems to forget that he has before him only natural elements deified, and appeals to Agni and Soma as to merciful gods. Can it be to a deified libation that the following prayer is addressed: "O Soma, high in wisdom, thou guidest in the right way. Through thy leading have our fathers, the wise ones, found joy and safety among the gods. Thou art full of wisdom, O Soma, and mighty in power. Thou art a bull in thy strength and greatness. Thine

are the laws of King Varuna. High and deep is thy state, O Soma. Thou shinest clear as Mitra, the beloved, thou art to be honoured as Aryaman."[1] "Be good to us," says the worshipper of Agni, to his god, "as a father to his son." Sometimes the gods of the sacrifice are invoked as if they knew what holiness and pity meant. "Soma heals all who are sick; he makes the blind to see, and the lame to walk. Thou dost shield us, O Soma, from the sorrows we make for ourselves, and from those that spring from others. That which is lost he brings back, and uplifts the pious."[2] Agni acts the part of mediator between earth and heaven. All the gods make him their messenger.[3] In one hymn addressed to the same gods we read: "Ye gods who are our kindred, be gracious to me, who pray to you. I confess much wrong that I have done you, and ye have punished me as a father his son. Remove from me the strokes, remove the sins."[4]

We must make allowance in prayers like these, for the retrospective influence exerted by a higher worship upon that which preceded it, through the tendency we have already noticed in this religion to confound all the separate gods with one another.

§ V.—Indra.

It is not possible that the explanation of all things should be found in the perpetual renewal and expansion of life. In opposition to the principle of life, there is everywhere the power of death. In the sky we see the thick heavy cloud which seems the grave of the light. The demon of darkness holds the dawn imprisoned, as a robber shuts up cows in a cave. Upon earth the power of destruction blasts the fields with barrenness, smites the flocks and strikes down man in his prime. Lastly, the enemy with the black hair and dark skin attacks the noble Aryan race. This evil element bears many names in the Vedas, and appears under various forms. He is

[1] Rig Veda, i. 91.
[2] Ibid., viii. 68.
[3] Ibid., ii., viii. 23, 18.
[4] Ibid., ii. 29, 4, 5.

sometimes called *Vritra, the enveloper,* a name which indicates that he is primarily a demoniacal power in the atmosphere, which enshrouds the light or imprisons the fertilising waters;[1] at other times he is called Ahi, the cloud-serpent. These are the leaders, the *Dakshas,* and are demons of darkness in the heavens, and enemies of the Aryans upon earth. For the conflict in heaven has always its counterpart upon earth. If the power of these evil spirits was not resisted, the world would become theirs. A powerful god carries on the war with them, sustained by brave auxiliaries.

This powerful God is Indra, "the Vedic Jupiter, who reaches the enemy and overcomes him, standing on the summit, *true of speech,* most powerful in thought."[2] His first battle field is the heavenly regions. There he must conquer, before pursuing and crushing his enemies upon earth, who are also the enemies of the Aryan race. Indra is peculiarly the storm-god; the thunder is his weapon.[3] He is at first the simple personification of a force of nature, the lightning flash of deadly effect. But by the very fact that as God of the universal conflict, he becomes a historical figure, and draws near to man to succour and deliver him, he is invested with a far more marked individuality than that of the gods of the sacrifices, and yet he also becomes in the end confounded with all the rest, and is lost in the obscure abyss of the impersonal gods.

This is the final term to which the Vedic conception must logically lead, but above logic we have to deal with real life, the life of a feeble creature like man, exposed to peril, suffering and death. He needs a divine deliverer, who shall fight for him against the powers of evil by which he is surrounded on every side. Thus he clings with passionate ardour to the divine champion of light and life. He makes him for a time a living god, whose help can be invoked in all need and in whose goodness he may safely trust. This god, the son of power, the celestial bull,[4] who wears the heaven as a helmet,[5] fights not for himself but

[1] Rig Veda, x. 38, 3.
[2] "India," Max Müller, p. 65.
[3] Rig Veda, i. 130, 4; 101, 1. Indra comes from *Ihn,* to burn.
[4] Ibid., iii. 13, 31.
[5] Ibid., ii. 17, 1.

for men. He shares the spoil with his faithful ones,[1] and gives them strength themselves to overcome.[2] The constant ally of pious warriors, he provides his suppliants with horses and cows, as he gathers the clouds by the voice of his thunder.[3] Lastly it is he who gives victory to his followers in the conflict of nation with nation; it is to him therefore that all eyes are turned for help. The prayers which he inspires in his worshippers are full of trust and gratitude, and often breathe a truly lofty sentiment.

As we have already said, it is in the celestial regions that he has his first conflicts with the demons of darkness. He delivers the cows of light, the divine dawns, and gives back to the sun his splendour.[4]

The great battle of the storm is described by the Vedic poets with incomparable power. Lifting his majestic head like the lofty summit of the Himalyas, and roaring with his thunder which seems like the bellowing of the heavenly bull, the mighty god scatters terror all around. The trees of the valley bow in affright, the granite mountains shake as if they were but dust.[5] He breaks the power of Vritra in the heavens, and rends the veils in which he had bound even the waters. He wields his lightning; he has sharpened it like a practised cutler, and as one fells a tree with an axe, so he cuts down the dragon.[6]

He is not alone in this terrible conflict; under him fight the *Maruts*, the storm gods. Their chief is *Rudra*, the howler, the fairhaired god, who only wields the thunder in the behalf of man and to protect his herds.[7] We shall find him playing presently an important part in the Brahman mythology. The company of the Maruts are mounted on a shining car; the lance of a thousand colours is in their hand with the glittering spear. The cracking of their whips is heard from afar. Their troop moves forward with dazzling swiftness. Beneath their tread the earth trembles like an aged woman. Man bows before them in awe.[8] They low like a cow after her calf. They

[1] Rig Veda, i. 55, 5; viii. 45, 40.
[2] Ibid., i. 8, 3.
[3] Ibid., vi. 44, 12.
[4] Ibid., viii. 6, 28; vi. 17, 5.
[5] Ibid., i. 54; i. 55; i. 63.
[6] Ibid., i. 130; iv. 17.
[7] Ibid., i. 37.
[8] Ibid., i. 57.

glow with the ruddy light of fire; they roar like lions. Vâyu, the wind, is the faithful companion of Indra; it is he who awakens the sky and makes it visible, the earth also, clothing it with the purple of the morning. Glorious is his chariot. He goes on his way spreading rosy light over the sky, and lifting the dust from the earth. Under his breath the waters rush along like women hurrying to an assembly. This first-born of the waters never sleeps. Whence comes he? Who made him? He, the spirit of the gods, the germ of the world, goes where he will. His voice is heard; his form is not seen.[1]

Indra, after triumphing in the celestial regions, begins to fight upon earth; he is the national god of the Aryans. By his help the black-skinned races are subdued and the Aryans take their flocks. Thus his protection is invoked on the day of battle, when the sharp arrows fly through the air, when the combatants use their muscles, when the chariots rush down the slopes like falcons upon their prey, and sweep along like overflowing torrents.[2] The favour of Indra is secured by sacrifice and prayer. Sacrifice is more than mere homage; it augments the strength of the god. The Soma renews in him the divine substance; for it is from its nutritive juice, as from the vital fire of Agni, that he derives his strength. Sometimes he appears to be confounded with Agni and Soma, who are always present in the sacrifices offered to him. He shares in the dignity of these gods. Like them he is called the creator of heaven and earth. Though he occupies a position of such supreme dignity, he still needs, like the other gods, to be sustained by the sacrificial aliments. Thus fortified he contends victoriously with the serpent Ahi.

The sacrifice offered on the earthly altar corresponds to the heavenly, of which it is a reproduction. In the upper sphere the gods serve as priests.[3] Upon earth the offerings brought to Indra are oxen, sheep, grain, cakes, but above all the Soma which refreshes him in both worlds and fills him with new energy.[4] Prayers form an important part of the worship of Indra. Their influence

[1] Rig Veda, x. 168.
[2] Ibid., viii. 36, 4.
[3] Ibid., iv. 24, 5.
[4] Ibid., x. 122.

for good is expressed in this beautiful figure: "When the singers among men have lifted up their voices, then that which they desire grows like a branch." Prayers ought always to accompany the Soma, which they embrace like loving spouses. They thus reinforce the vigour of the god by the magical virtue of the sacred formula. As the sea is fed by the rivers, so Indra is strengthened by our prayers.[1]

Prayer is now the cow by which Indra is nourished, now the arrow which his suppliants put into his hands, now the driver of his chariot, and sometimes even the chariot itself.[2]

Brahmanaspati, the lord of spells and of prayer, is so closely associated with Indra, that he seems sometimes to take his place in the conflict with the Vritras.[3] Indra himself sings hymns in the storm.[4] His priests are the descendants of the glorious sons of Manu, those celestial sacrificers, who by their songs enabled him to break open the stable in which the cows of dawn were shut up.[5]

There is a peculiarly close bond between man and such a god as this, who is his constant helper and mighty deliverer. "Thou only among the gods takest pity on mortals,"[6] say his worshippers. The trust placed in him is expressed in a touching manner. He is called "The ear that hears prayer," and is thus addressed: "Till the earlier serves the later, and the higher is rewarded by the lower, and not till then, will the god hold aloof from us.' "O glorious one, give us of thy riches. The man, O Indra, who lovingly worships thee, is near to thee. O Thunderer, he is thy companion."[7] "I would not part with thee, O Indra, at any price . . . . More art thou to me than father or tender brother. Like a mother, thou fillest me with good. Whither art thou gone? where tarriest thou? Hasten hither, O warrior-hero, for our songs are sung to thee."[8] To the worshipper of Indra, life is an overflowing stream; he walks in the sunshine of the divine favour. This favour is not secured

[1] Rig Veda, viii. 87.
[2] Ibid., i. 62; vi. 47, 10; x. 41, 1; viii. 79, 1; i. 61, 4.
[3] Ibid., ii. 4; 26, 2.
[4] Ibid., x. 44.
[5] Ibid., x. 61, 7.
[6] Ibid., vii. 23, 5.
[7] Ibid., vii. 132.
[8] Ibid., viii. 1.

by sacrifice alone; the holy intention is accepted also. "Though I have no cows to offer," says the poorer worshipper to Indra, "I bring thee what I have."[1] The sacrifice is accepted when the Soma is offered willingly. Indra sometimes appears as a god of mercy. The wretched turn to him. "To the darkness of the blind he can bring light. May Indra help us."[2]

Such appeals to compassion are rare in the hymns addressed to Indra. He is generally the awful god who makes the mountains, the sea, and the burning deserts tremble; the invincible warrior, who overthrows his enemies, while he lavishes his gifts on those who bring their sacrifices freely to him. In the drama of nature as of history, he is above all the mighty god, ever wrestling with the powers of evil. We may quote in conclusion the hymn from the Vedas which gives the most complete picture of the great god of battle.

"Keep silence well! we offer praise to the great Indra in the house of the sacrificer. Does he find treasure for those who are like sleepers? Mean praise is not valued among the munificent.

"Thou art the giver of horses, Indra; thou art the giver of cows, the giver of corn, the strong lord of wealth; the old guide of man, disappointing no desires, a friend to friends; to him we address this song.

"O powerful Indra, achiever of many works, most brilliant god—all this wealth around here is known to be thine alone. Take from it, conqueror! Do not stint the desire of the worshipper who longs for thee!

"On these days thou art gracious, and on these nights, keeping off the enemy from our cows and from our stud. Tearing the fiend night after night with the help of Indra, let us rejoice in food, freed from haters.

"Let us rejoice, Indra, in treasure and food, in wealth of manifold delight and splendour. Let us rejoice in the blessing of the gods which gives us the strength of offspring, gives us cows first and horses.

"These draughts inspired thee, O lord of the brave! these were vigour, these libations, in battles; when for the

[1] Rig Veda, viii. 91, 19. [2] Ibid., i. 100.

sake of the poet, the sacrificer, thou struckest down irresistibly ten thousands of enemies.

* * * * *

"We who in future protected by the gods, wish to be thy most blessed friends, we shall praise thee, blessed by thee with offspring and enjoying henceforth a longer life."[1]

One would think that the worship of this warrior-god should have arrested India on the verge of that abyss of the unfathomable unity, into which it was about to precipitate itself. The question forces itself upon us with special reference to Indra, who at first seems so much to resemble Ormazd, how it was that this valiant god should not, like the god of Iran, have led his followers on to victory in the conflict with death and evil? The answer is not hard to find. In the first place, Indra never really occupied the sole place of supremacy. He was constantly confounded with the gods of the sacrifices, and thus came within the circle of pantheistic syncretism. Then he also is, in the end, confounded with his worshipper. Like Agni and Soma, he lives by the sacrifice. Men bring to him of his proper substance, and he is nourished by it. We are thus met again by the metaphysical difficulty: the created being has no proper life apart from the infinite being. So long as the created and the uncreated are confounded, we cannot get beyond fatalism in the natural life, and evil is only a fiction, since it is inevitable. Indra may thunder and rage in battle, but he is only carrying out, after all, the invariable law of nature, according to which lightning and storm always in the end rend the black cloud, and light comes forth in morning radiance from her prison house of night. Lastly, while the Iranian god shows a constant tendency to rise above his naturalistic origin, and to become a moral power, the Indian god remains so to speak in his heavy swaddling clothes. There is nothing therefore to prevent naturism from running its fatal course in India, and arriving at the inevitable goal of pantheism—

[1] Rig Veda, i. 53, Max Müller's Translation: "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. pp. 31, 32.

the absorption of the parts in the whole, because those parts, having no independent existence, must ultimately be lost in the cosmic unity and merged in the absolute. The Soma with which Indra is intoxicated is not the generous wine which stimulates to fruitful effort. It is the great narcotic of the ancient East, the morbid fascination of the pantheistic idea. Such must of necessity be the final term of the religious evolution in India. In vain did the god of battles hold for a time all the fibres of the intellectual life in full tension. The reaction was not strong enough to change the whole character and course of the religion. It was reserved, moreover, for another god than Indra, to lift the religious consciousness of India to its highest point.

§ VI.—VARUNA.[1]

It is necessary to distinguish between the Varuna of the Vedas and the original Varuna, who was the primitive god of all the Aryan race before its dispersion. We have recognised him as the great sun-god, the god of heaven who, without identifying himself with the celestial light, finds in it his highest manifestation. He never ceases to inhabit the heaven which is identified with his name, but he casts off almost entirely the bonds of naturism. Intellectual and moral qualities predominate in him over the mere notion of a deified force of nature, and in this respect, he infinitely surpasses Indra. It is impossible to define the time or the mode of this transition, for the simple reason that the religious conscience of India does not take a step in advance without linking on all the past, with all its gods, whom it identifies with the new divinity.

Thus Agni and Soma were, so to speak, merged in Indra, and all together were afterwards identified with Varuna. No part of the earlier faith seems to be abandoned, and yet this pantheistic syncretism of the gods received at least for a time a new element. There are even traces in the best days of the worship of Varuna, of an evolution going beyond syncretism. More than one

[1] See M. Bergaigne, "La religion Védique. Varuna," to which we are largely indebted.

Vedic hymn indeed alludes to a conflict between Indra and Varuna. Indra seems sometimes to represent the good element in contact with Varuna the evil. This anomaly, where so great and holy a god is concerned, is to be explained by the contrast on one essential point between Varuna and Indra. Indra is always regarded as the great champion of the principle of light against the evil power, the dark serpent, the demon who seeks to quench the light in his coils. This trenchant opposition ceases when Varuna is looked upon as the supreme god. Dualism is replaced by a conception which if not monotheistic, is at least henotheistic. Varuna is the first among the *Asuras*. The word *Asura* is used for the supreme power, universal sovereignty. In order to express the omnipotence of Indra it is said that he exercised the *Asura* among the gods.[1] The root of Asura is *Asa*, breath, the life. Asura is the lord of life who disposes of it sovereignly. Nothing escapes this sovereignty. There is no power which can oppose itself to his. Consequently it is he who bestows or holds back life and its precious gifts; it is he who imprisons the light and sets it free; he dispenses as he will suffering and healing; he is the god who binds and looses.

The same idea is attached to another name of Varuna and of the group of gods over which he presides. The *Asuras* are also *Adityas*, which signifies all-powerful sovereigns, from the word *aditi*, free, not bound. It follows that they know no law but their own will, and are the universal sovereigns[2] by whom the three worlds are upheld.[3] They make the sun to shine in unclouded splendour, but they also draw the veil of night.[4] If Varuna sends forth the sun on its wide orbit, he also hides it from our eyes either when night falls,[5] or when he covers the heaven with clouds and pours down the rain. If in accordance with Indian syncretism, he is often confounded with Agni and Soma,[6] in other passages of the Vedas he is opposed to them as an evil god. Thus the greatest of the gods is made for a moment to seem the

[1] Rig Veda, vi. 36, 1.
[2] Ibid., viii. 27, 22.
[3] Ibid., ii 27, 4.
[4] Ibid., vii. 66, 11.
[5] Ibid., viii. 41, 10.
[6] Ibid., viii. 87, 6; vii 88, 2.

very prince of the demons.[1] This strange confusion was the natural consequence of a persistent dualism.

The worshipper of Indra the warrior-god, who maintains the perpetual conflict with evil, could not reconcile himself to a god who not only does not fight, but who sends the plagues which afflict the earth. This seemed to him an insoluble contradiction, so long as he had not grasped the idea of the perfect freedom of the supreme god, and learned to regard him as absolute goodness. The religious consciousness of the Aryans of India rose very nearly to this height in the palmy days of the worship of Varuna, but it was only for a time, and never without an admixture of lower elements.

The two great ideas of sovereignty and of holiness really permeated more or less the religious conception of which Varuna was the embodiment. He was regarded indeed as the sovereign god, inasmuch as nothing was beyond his sway, and he had no need to fight in order to give light to the world. The exercise of his magic, that is of his occult power, sufficed. He was then the most high, the all-powerful. Again, if he was the dispenser of evils, it was as the avenger of the law. The dark side of his being corresponded to the righteous indignation of offended justice. Pain became chastisement. The whole of religion, with its rites and sacrifices, acquired a new, a deeper and holier meaning. This explains the lofty, even sublime language, in which some of the Vedic hymns expressed the adoration of Varuna.

His sovereignty is manifested in the first place, in the fact that all the other gods are subordinate to him, commencing with Indra, who receives his thunder from him. This great god who established the heavens and the earth, and is exalted over all worlds as universal king, is at the same time a father to his creatures. Thus the hymns to his praise almost always conclude with an appeal to his goodness.

"Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments (heaven and earth). He

[1] M. Bergaigne (vol. iii. p. 113) connects Varuna, *οὐρανός*, with the root *vri*, envelopment, which would in one aspect assimilate the supreme god to the demoniacal power. Only if darkness is among the all things which proceed from him, it is the wicked whom he catches in its nets.

lifted on high the bright and glorious heaven; he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth.

"Do I say this to my own self? How can I get unto Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with a quiet mind, see him propitiated?"[1]

Varuna prepared the paths for the sun, and sent the rivers running down to the sea. He opened the great gates of day. The wind, the breath of his mouth, rushes through space, like wild herds feeding in the prairie. And in both worlds all things are dear to him. Varuna and Mitra, who is inseparable from him, are proclaimed the sovereign rulers of the world. Their dominion over the universe which they have made to be the world of man, has no end.[2] They have made the plant to grow, have called the cows into being, have given strength to the horses, have stored the fire in the waters, set the sun in the sky and the Soma in the rocks. Begirt with clouds, many-hued like the rainbow, they cause the rain to fall, when the thunder rolls through the darkened heavens, and the milk of the sky flows in floods. The best gift of Varuna to man is intelligence and wisdom. Varuna has not only omnipotence but omniscience. "He who knows the place of the birds that fly through the sky, who, on the water, knows the ships; He, the upholder of order, who knows the track of the wind, of the wide, the bright, the mighty, and knows those who reside on high. He, the upholder of order, Varuna, sits down among his people; he, the wise, sits there to govern. From thence perceiving all wondrous things, he sees what has been and what will be done. May he, the wise Aditya, make our paths straight all our days; may he prolong our lives."[3]

The prayer of man goes up to him. "O hear this my calling, Varuna, be gracious to me. Longing for help, I have called upon thee. Thou, O wise god, art lord of all, of heaven and earth; listen on thy way."[4]

The following fragment of the Atharva Veda does not go beyond the lofty idea which the Vedas have given of Varuna.

[1] Rig Veda, vii. 86.
[2] Ibid., v. 63.
[3] Ibid., i. 25
[4] Ibid.

"The great lord of these worlds sees as if he were near. If a man thinks he is walking by stealth, the gods know it all.

"If a man stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or to get up; what two people sitting together whisper, King Varuna knows it; he is there as the third.

"This earth too belongs to Varuna, the king, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are Varuna's loins; he is also contained in the small drop of water. He who would flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna the king. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world; with thousand eyes they overlook this earth.

"King Varuna sees all this, what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of men. As a player throws the dice, he settles all things.

"May all thy fatal nooses which stand spread out seven by seven and threefold, catch the man who tells a lie; may they pass by him who tells the truth."[1]

The conclusion of this hymn brings us to the grandest characteristic of Varuna—holiness. It is not indeed absolute holiness, for there is a considerable admixture of naturalistic elements, but it sets the idea of good in strong relief against the background of superstition and legend. Good is regarded especially as the opposite to falsehood, as is apparent from the closing strophe of the hymn just quoted, and as we might naturally expect in a religion in which the opposition between light and darkness is more than a symbol. The idea of law is very prominent in the prayers offered to Varuna. "Thy laws," it is said, "rest upon thee as on a mountain." Here the reference is not simply to the fixity of natural law by which the courses of the stars are governed, nor to the strict observance of sacred rites.[2] It is used unquestionably

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop," Max Müller, vol. i. pp. 41, 42.

[2] There are several words expressing the idea of law. *Vritra*, from *ri*, that which is joined, fitted, fixed, is the essential word. Max Müller is wrong when he assigns as the origin of this notion of law, the spectacle of the regularity of natural law. ("Origin and Growth of Religion," Lecture v., p. 239.) The idea of responsibility so closely connected with

in a moral sense in several significant passages, as for instance, that in which it is said that Varuna and Mitra are faithful to the law in keeping an eye on the deceptions practised by men, and in justly punishing every violator of truth and honour.[1]

But strict justice does not exhaust our duty to our neighbour; there are also services of love incumbent on us. "He who does not give food to the hungry and drink to him whose tongue is parched for thirst, he who hardens his heart against him who intreats of him, shall himself find none to take pity on him. He only has true enjoyment who shares with the poor and gives to him that needeth. It shall be so done to him when he sues for help, and he makes himself a friend for the future. In vain does the fool provide himself with food; I speak the truth, it shall only be his death. No friend has he and no companion; want comes to him who only seeks his own."[2] The evil which men do to themselves, as in gambling, is as severely reprobated.[3] The man who is faithful to the law is contrasted with the deceiver. "By keeping to your path of life," says the worshipper to Varuna and Mitra, "we pass safely through danger as through the sea on ships."[4] This is a great advance beyond the simple law of nature, the law of fatalism sustained by force.

The clearest indication how far this law of fatalism is left behind, is to be found in the deep sense of sin expressed in many penitential hymns. These would be utterly unmeaning if man did not feel his own responsibility. The moral idea conveyed in these ardent prayers is both lofty and pure. The Asuras, Varuna and Mitra, are looked upon as the guardians and avengers of the violated law. They take cognisance of all and do not pass by any misdeeds. The sun is their spy; he is as it were their great all-seeing eye. Agni often performs the same

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the moral law is not derived from the spectacle of nature, which gives only the notion of regularity, fixity. The idea of responsibility must spring from the depths of the conscience, else we derive the greater from the less.

[1] Rig Veda, ii. 27, 4.
[2] Ibid., x. 117.
[3] Ibid., vii. 86, 6.
[4] Ibid., vii. 65, 3.

part. He is called "the eye of the great law."[1] "Why dost thou accuse us to Varuna, O Agni? What is our sin?"[2]

Sin committed is punished by these great gods. Their hand binds the guilty with heavy fetters which they alone can loose, and which represent the various punishments inflicted. The offender is likened to a thief loaded with chains, or to a calf bound with a cord. Sometimes the sin itself is regarded as an accursed chain, from which the suppliant prays to be loosed. "Take from me my sin like a fetter, O Varuna."[3]

Sin is not only failure in the performance of the law of sacrifice and ritual, it has its seat in the heart. It is the intention which lends gravity to the fault. "It was not our own doing, O Varuna, it was necessity, or temptation, an intoxicating draught, passion, dice, thoughtlessness."[4] The Adityas see the good and evil in the heart of man, which is full of desires.

Sin, of whatever sort, is a debt to the gods, who demand its payment.[5] The Adityas, the heavenly guardians of the great world-all, are just to punish guilt and to obtain the payment of all debts.[6] There is a close solidarity among mankind. They suffer the consequences of sin committed by their forefathers. "Move far away from me all self-committed guilt, and may I not, O king, suffer for what others have committed. Many dawns have not yet dawned; grant us to live in them, O Varuna!"

"Whether it be my companion or a friend, who, while I was asleep and trembling, uttered fearful spells against me, whether it be a thief or a wolf who wishes to hurt me, protect us against them, O Varuna."[7] The solidarity of the race in sin is thus expressed with as much clearness as vigour.

The mere fact that the guilty one invokes the pardon of his god, shows that he believes in his mercy, which indeed is plainly affirmed. "O that we were guiltless before Varuna, before him who has mercy on the sinner!"[8]

[1] Rig Veda, iv. 13; x. 35, 83.
[2] Ibid., v. 3, 5.
[3] Ibid., ii. 28.
[4] Ibid., v. 6.
[5] Ibid., i. 87, 4.
[6] Ibid., ii. 27, 4.
[7] Ibid., ii. 28.
[8] Ibid., vii. 87, 7.

"Ye gods, lift up the fallen one, and him who has committed sin, ye, O gods, make new again."[1]

Varuna is indeed not simply a just god; he is also a father full of pity. Thus the penitent lifts to him pleading hands and a sore heart. "As a bird shields her young with her wings, so he extends his protection to his worshippers." "Come near to me to-day, O ye gods, for I would cast myself trembling on your heart. Save us, that the wolf may not devour us, and that we fall not into his lair."[2]

The guilty one seeks to appease Varuna. This he tries to do first by hymns. "To propitiate thee, O Varuna, we unbend thy mind with songs, as the charioteer a weary steed."[3] But his chief reliance is on tears and prayers. These he says, fly up to the god "as birds to their nests."[4] Sacrifice is no longer merely the food of the gods. The idea of atonement is added. The need of a mediator is expressed in the following hymn: "O Agni, invoke Mitra, Varuna, Indra for the faults that we have committed; give pardon!"[5] "Bring near, O Agni, the gods who work in love, that they may be gracious unto us."[6] "O Agni, procure us favour with Varuna (with the Maruts, the all-shining ones)."

"For kith and kin, O bright and gracious Agni, procure thou deliverance. Thou who knowest how, O Agni, turn away from us the anger of the god, of Varuna. Be thou the nearest to us, O Agni, with thy help; be our dearest friend by the light of this dawn. Appease Varuna towards us; grant us to find favour in his sight; be thou ready to hear our cry!"[7]

Neither sacrifice nor the mediation of Agni avails to quiet the troubled soul. In its distress, it casts itself as it were into the arms of the all-powerful god whom it calls father, however thick the veil by which his glorious face is still hidden. Then there rises into the mysterious region, one of the most pathetic cries that ever proceeded from the conscience of man. It is first of all a confessi n

[1] Rig Veda, x. 137, 1.
[2] Ibid., ii. 29.
[3] Ibid., i. 25, 3.
[4] Ibid., i. 25, 4.
[5] Ibid., vii. 93, 7.
[6] Ibid., x. 150, 3.
[7] Ibid., iv. 1. See the entire hymn.

of sins, of those of which the man is himself conscious, and those which are known alone to the All-Searcher. "How can I get unto Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with a quiet mind, see him propitiated? I ask, O Varuna, wishing to know this my sin. I go to ask the wise. The sages all tell me the same. Varuna it is who is angry with thee.

"Was it an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend who always praises thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable lord, and I will quickly turn to thee with praise, freed from sin. Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which are committed with our own bodies. . . . . Let me without sin give satisfaction to the angry god, like a slave to the bounteous lord. The lord god enlightened the foolish; he, the wisest, leads his worshippers to wealth.

"O lord Varuna, may this song go well to thy heart! May we prosper in keeping and acquiring! Protect us, O gods, always with your blessings!" [1]

These passionate utterances of confused desire seem to beat against the bars, and at length burst forth into a sublime hymn far loftier in conception than the purest ideals of the national religion. It rises like the upsoaring of a caged eagle suddenly set free.

"Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!

"If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!

"Through want of strength, thou strong and bright god, have I gone wrong; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!

"Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!

"Whenever, we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break the law through thoughtlessness; have mercy, almighty, have mercy!" [2]

How was it, we ask, that the religious consciousness of the Aryans of India, did not remain at this high level, but quickly fell again under the influence of the pantheistic idea, which it ultimately pushed to its extreme con-

[1] Rig Veda, vii. 86. [2] Ibid., vii. 89.

sequences? The answer is, that it had never completely shaken off that idea even in the glorious period when Varuna reigned supreme in the pantheon. We have already repeatedly observed that in the Vedic religion no god, however great, attained to an unchallenged supremacy in the theodicy, and as he was never able completely to displace the inferior gods, he came in the end to share their lower nature.

Thus the great enigma of evil remained unexplained, and its dark shadow fell even upon the shining face of the sovereign gods. Varuna presided, as we have seen, not only over the luminous, but over the sombre side of things. If he was the source of good, he was also the dispenser of evil, and that not merely as chastisement. Was it possible that a mind so philosophical as that of the Indian, should not ask of the gods an explanation of evil? In the end it charges it upon them, and at a later period the Asuras themselves are regarded as demoniacal powers. We thus arrive at a system in which good and evil are identified as only different manifestations of one principle, both equally necessary to universal being. Offended conscience does indeed lift up its voice against this delusion, but it is stifled by the predominance of metaphysical speculation, which silences its protests and hurries the national religion down the fatal incline, at the base of which is the negation of the gods, of man, in a word, of all being. This vindication of conscience is expressed nevertheless with extraordinary power, and can never be obliterated. It remains a standing argument against those subtle metaphysics of the East and West, which sacrifice the moral life to the idol of pantheistic speculation.

§ VII.—The Close of the Vedic Religion.[1]

As we approach the close of the Vedic era, we already discern the first signs of the coming transformation of its brilliant and vivid naturism into a religion at once sacerdotal and metaphysical.

[1] Max Müller's "Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion," Lectures VI., VII.

In the first place, the confusion of all the gods in a syncretism which utterly deprives them of individuality, becomes more and more marked in the hymns addressed to the most personal and powerful of those gods—Varuna.

We read in one of these hymns, "O lord of my prayer (Brihaspati), whether thou be Mitra or Varuna or Pûshan, come to my sacrifice!" Agni, really the god of fire, is said to be Indra and Vishnu, Savitri, Pûshan, Rudra, and Aditi; nay, he is said to be all the gods.[1] This complex and confused divinity which, from a metaphysical point of view, takes the place of the living and personal gods, is sometimes identified with Time. It is said of Indra that he was born of Time. A yet more abstract notion attributes the birth of the gods to the great mother Aditya, the holy one who produced all the glorious, the mighty, the sovereign ones, the gods, the Asuras.[2] Thus instead of gods sovereign and all powerful, we have abstract sovereignty, the unfathomable infinite!

Not only do the gods lose their individuality in this dreary absolute, but the very personality of man is absorbed also. In a somewhat obscure hymn relating to the dead, the spirit of the deceased is represented as wandering through earth and heaven, in the sun, on high mountains, in all created life. Nay more, it has been in some obscure way present in all that has been, and shall be in all that is to be.[3] We are thus brought back again to the hidden principle of being, the mysterious *One*. Thus we see the form of the god who lends himself most readily to pantheistic conceptions, Brahmanaspati, the lord of spells and of prayer, rising ever higher in the Indian pantheon, till all the other gods are lost in him.

This metaphysical evolution does not go on without a painful conflict of doubt, which assumes at first the form of an ever-recurring question, as in the following hymn.

"In the beginning there arose the golden child. He was the one born lord of all that is. He established the earth and this sky. Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

[1] Rig Veda, v. 3. [2] Ibid., viii. 23. [3] Ibid., ix. 58.

"He who gives life, he who gives strength; whose command all the bright gods revere; whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow is death. Who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice? He who through his power is the one king of the breathing and awakening world. He who governs all, man and beast; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"He whose greatness these snowy mountains, whose greatness the sun proclaims, with the distant river—he whose regions are, as it were, his two arms; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"He through whom the sky is bright and the earth firm, he through whom the heaven was stablished—nay the highest heaven—he who measured out the light in the air; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"He to whom heaven and earth standing firm by his word, look up, trembling inwardly—he over whom the rising sun shines forth; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"Wherever the mighty water-clouds went; where they placed the seed and lit the fire, thence arose he who is the sole life of the bright gods; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"He who by his might looked even over the water clouds, the clouds which gave strength and lit the sacrifice, he who alone is god above all gods; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"May he not destroy us, he the creator of the earth; or he, the righteous, who created the heaven; he also created the bright and mighty waters; who is the god to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"O Prajapati, no other than thou hast embraced all these created things."[1]

Prajapati, which in the popular language, is only another name for the sun, is evidently in this hymn something higher than the idea of deity current in the Vedas. The very repetition of the question implies a doubt. This doubt sometimes extends to the greatest gods of the Vedic pantheon, as in this exclamation:

[1] Rig Veda x. 121.

"If you wish for strength, offer to Indra a hymn o praise; a true hymn if Indra truly exist: for some one says Indra does not exist. Who has seen him? Whom shall we praise?" [1]

"Darkness is around us, we speak not knowing what we say," [2] we read again. Or once more the poet laments thus: "My ears vanish, my eyes vanish, and the light also which dwells in my heart; my mind with its far-off longing leaves me; what shall I say? what shall I think?" [3]

This doubt mingled with terror springs up because the shining pinnacles of the gods of light have vanished before the mysterious *One*, who is the essence of all things. "They speak," say the poets, "of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; that which is, and is *One*, the poets call in various ways." "Having once and more than once been invoked as the life-bringer, the sun is also called the breath or life of all that moves and rests; and lastly he becomes Visvakarman, by whom all the worlds have been brought together, and Prajâpati which means lord of man and all living creatures." [4]

Sometimes he seems still to retain some semblance of a distinct personality. It is said in a hymn of this period, that the one god, whose eyes are everywhere, his mouth everywhere, his arms everywhere, his feet everywhere, produced the earth and heaven. "Let us call upon him to-day in the battle, upon the Visvakarman, the maker of all things, who puts courage in our hearts. May he accept our offering of praise." [5]

This personality however soon fades away. Already in the hymn of praise just quoted, the worshipper asks: "O sages, search and know what was the standpoint, the firm ground, from which he the Creator of All, the All seeing, brought forth the earth, and with his might opened the heaven?" [6] Then abandoning this empty show of

[1] Rig Veda, viii. 100, 3.
[2] Ibid., x. 82, 7.
[3] Ibid., vi. 19, 6.
[4] "Origin and Growth of Religion," Max Müller, p. 267.
[5] Rig Veda, x. 81 9.
[6] Ibid., x. 81, 2.

adoration cloaking doubt, the Vedic poet at length exclaims, speaking of the great One: "Who saw him when he was first born, when he who has no bones, bore him who has bones? Where was the breath, the blood, the self of the world? Who went to ask this from any that knew it?"[1]

In another hymn we read: "Beyond the sky, beyond the earth, beyond the Devas and Asuras, what was the first germ which the waters bore, wherein all gods were seen? The waters bore that first germ in which all the gods came together. That *one* thing in which all creatures rested, was placed in the lap of the unborn."

"You will never know him who created these things; something else stands between you and him. Enveloped in mist and with faltering voice, the poets walk along rejoicing in life."[2]

In the famous hymn 129 of Book x. of the Rig Veda, we reach the last term of abstraction. We give Max Müller's metrical translation:

"Nor Aught nor Nought existed; yon bright sky
Was not, nor heaven's broad roof outstretched above.
What covered all? what sheltered? what concealed?
Was it the water's fathomless abyss?
There was not death—yet was there nought immortal,
There was no confine betwixt day and night;
The Only One breathed breathless by itself,
Other than It there nothing since has been.
Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled
In gloom profound—an ocean without light—
The germ that still lay covered in the husk
Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat.
Then first came love upon it, the new spring
Of mind—yet poets in their heart discerned,
Pondering, this bond between created things
And uncreated. Comes this spark from earth
Piercing and all-pervading, or from heaven?
Then seeds were sown and mighty powers arose,
Nature below, and power and will above;
Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here?
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The gods themselves came later into being—
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?

[1] Rig Veda, i. 164, 4.

[2] Ibid., x. 82.

He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether his will created or was mute,
The most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it—or perchance even he knows not."[1]

We must not suppose that the religious sentiment in its popular form was steeped in these transcendental abstractions. The Vedic gods were living realities to the greater part of their worshippers; and they believed that they received from them protection, pardon, and all the good gifts of this life. It is none the less true that the daring thinkers who were already standing on the dizzy verge of the fathomless abyss of the mysterious *One*, brought out forcibly the contradiction inherent in the religion of the Vedas, and prepared the way for the transition through Brahmanism to Buddhism.

Many sincerely pious souls indeed, who did not rise to the chilling heights of these subtle metaphysics, were instinctively conscious of the inadequacy of their beliefs, and recognised the contradiction to which we have just alluded. Hence the touching aspirations expressed in some of their hymns, after the perfect light and happiness beyond the tomb. We find this prayer addressed to Soma:

"Where there is eternal light in the world, where the sun is placed, in that immortal, imperishable world, place me, O Soma. Where king Vaivasata reigns, where the secret place of heaven is, where these mighty waters are, there make me immortal!

"Where life is free, in the third heaven of heavens, where the worlds are radiant, there make me immortal!

"Where wishes and desires are, where the bowl of the bright Soma is, where there is food and rejoicing, there make me immortal!

"Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and pleasure reside, where the desires of our desire are attained, there make me immortal."[2]

"Who knows the truth?" we read in another hymn. "Who can show us the path that leads to the gods? We

[1] Rig Veda, x. 129. Translation from Lecture by Max Müller on the Veda and Zend-Avesta.

[2] Rig Veda, ix. 113, 7.

see but their lower seat. Their ways are far above and hidden from our sight."[1]

We find a still more beautiful and touching expression of this deep sense of dissatisfaction oppressing the heart of the worshipper of the Vedic gods, in one strophe of the beautiful hymn to Varuna already quoted by us: "Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters."[2] As he stood thus by the springing fountains of his religion, the son of Vedic India felt the burning thirst of his soul unassuaged.

This is more conclusive evidence than any mere argument, of the paradoxical and powerless nature of this religion. The soul in its despair, exclaims :—

"Which of all these gods will hear our cry and be favourable unto us? Who will come down and deliver us?"[3]

[1] Rig Veda, iii. 54, 5. [2] Ibid., vii. 89, 4. [3] Ibid., x. 64, 1.

CHAPTER IV.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE RELIGION OF THE VEDAS AFTER THE SETTLEMENT OF THE VEDIC ARYANS ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGES.[1]

§ I.—Growth of Brahmanism.

THE Aryans underwent both a social and religious transformation when they settled on the shores of the Ganges. Their constitution became strictly monarchical and hierarchical, the priesthood forming the keystone of the arch. Its tendency was always in this direction; but, as we have seen, the priest was at first rather a divine singer than a sacrificer. The father of the family was the priest in his own house, but those who were invested with the sacerdotal office had, even in these early times, a great influence. The priestly families were distinguished by a particular mode of dressing the hair. The priests occupied a place of honour side by side with those petty princes or chiefs of the clan, whose position had a certain amount of dignity attaching to it, since the gods whom they represented, were supposed to have chariots drawn by magnificently caparisoned horses, vast palaces, and a great seraglio. The life of priests and princes was, nevertheless, still agricultural; their wealth consisted in the possession of large flocks. They had not yet begun to seek perfection in asceticism.

We have no data as to the time when these Aryans arrived on the banks of the Ganges, and after prolonged fightings, established themselves in the fertile lands watered by the river. The different clans of the conquerors disputed among themselves for their possession,

[1] See Dunker, "Geschichte des Alterthums," vol. iii.

and the old inhabitants were reduced to slavery. In process of time, distinct nations and great states took the place of the clans. This period of conquest was no doubt prolonged through centuries. The great epic poems give no precise information as to what took place. They simply preserve the memory of wars of conquest. We are now brought into contact with powerful monarchies and with a hierarchy consisting of four great classes. 1st, The Brahmans; 2nd, The warriors; 3rd, The husbandmen; 4th, the Sûdras. These Sûdras are the old inhabitants, vanquished and reduced to slavery.

This system of caste is an entirely new feature. In the Vedic times, there was no marked and absolute distinction among the various classes of the nation. The conquered aborigines were simply devoted to contempt as *dâsyas* or enemies. One solitary verse is quoted from the Vedas, in which it is said that the priest, the warrior, the husbandman, and the serf, all alike formed part of Brahma.[1] "When they divided man, how many did they make him? What was his mouth? what his arm? what are called his thighs and feet? The Brahmana was his mouth, the Râyanya was made his arms, the Vaisya became his thighs, the Sûdra was born from his feet." [2]

European critics are able to show that even this verse is of later origin than the great mass of the hymns, and that it contains modern words, such as Sûdra and Râyanya, which are not found again in the other hymns of the Rig Veda, and belong to a later period. Then again, there is no trace of a constituted hierarchy in the times of the Vedas. The text quoted is simply a pantheistic formula. The distinction of castes was the peculiar work of the Brahmans, when they had acquired more power. This new charter is thus formulated in the Brâhmanas. "Aryas are only the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, for they are admitted to the sacrifices. They shall not speak with everybody, but only with the Brahman, the Kshatriya and the Vaisya. If they have occasion to converse with a Sûdra, let them say to another man,

[1] Rig Veda, x. 90, 6, 7.

[2] "Chips from a German Workshop," Max Müller, vol. ii., Caste, p. 312.

'Tell this Sûdra so.'"[1] We thus get a privileged race comprising all the Aryans who are subdivided into three holy castes; but as the distinctive sign of the noble class is admission to the sacrifices, this is the presiding caste to which belongs the moral supremacy. The Brahmans even go so far as to give themselves the name of gods.

The change of climate, the first consequence of which was an entire change in the manner of living, had a great influence in the transformation of the religious ideas. Little by little the brilliant life of the early Aryans grew dull and torpid under the burning sky. Thus the old gods who carried on so desperate a struggle in the clouds and upon the earth, began to lose their importance, while the god of prayer was more and more in the ascendant. The priesthood devised a veritable apotheosis for him. Brahma, who under the name of Brahmanaspati, had already begun to rise in the old Vedic pantheon, came at length to fill the foremost place in it, and to reign with undivided sway. He became the highest impersonation of the divine in all its aspects. Indra could not be the favourite god of the priests, for he was the type of the warriors, the very god of battles. He then, with all his impetuous comrades in fight, must descend to the second rank. As to Varuna, not only did he lose his supremacy, but he came at last to personify with all the Adityas or Asuras, if not the element of evil, at least that of calamity. The Asuras became more and more identified with the demons.

This strange transformation is very naturally explained. We have seen that Varuna, as well as the other Asuras or Adityas, allotted by turns happiness and suffering. He was the god who bound and loosed, who made night and day, because he governed all things, and was raised entirely above the dualistic element. During the time of his supremacy, the sorrows of which he was the dispenser, were the ministers of justice, of righteous indignation, and were designed to call men to repentance. But as soon as he became a secondary god, only one among others, this element of misfortune was attributed to his perversity, and thus from the summit of sanctity he was flung down,

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop," Max Müller, vol. ii., Caste, p. 336.

in the Brahmanic era, to the infernal regions where the demons reign. It is true that their maleficent power is not of much account, inasmuch as all separate contingent life tends more and more to be lost in the divine unity.

The religious reformation was effected by the Brahmans by slow degrees. There was no loud proclamation of a new doctrine provoking schism and strife. The Brahmans never ceased to profess the most profound respect for the religion of their fathers and for the sacred hymns in which it was embodied. They were never weary of extolling the Vedas. Only as the language in which these songs had been written, became more and more a dead language, their authority imposed very little restraint upon them, and they could introduce what innovations they chose both in ritual and doctrine. Moreover, these innovators had none of the grand poetic diction of the singers of the Indian Aryas. The live coal had never touched their lips. There was between them and the Vedic poets, the same difference as between the prophets and doctors of the law in Israel. "The great and only business now is to know the Brahmanas, that is to say, the sacred texts, their use and the secret exegesis of them as handed down by tradition; to know the rites of religion with their hidden and mystic meanings."[1] Great privileges are always promised to him who knows, for the gods love the man who fathoms the unfathomable. The Brahmans were the scribes of the Indian religion.

After elaborating subtle interpretations by which they in reality changed altogether the character of the ancient religion, they began by remodelling the worship, rendering it more and more complicated, and proportionately exalting the functions of the priest. The Vedas, by assimilating the earthly to the heavenly sacrifice, had already given great importance to ritual, but this importance was indefinitely magnified in the cultus of the Brahmans. In this way the gods of prayer came to be exalted over the Asuras. "Certain insignificant ceremonial arrangements are the reasons why the sun rises in the east and sets in the opposite quarter, why rivers flow in one direction

[1] Barth, "The Religions of India," p. 44.

rather than another, why the prevailing wind blows from the north-west, and why harvests ripen earlier in the south."[1] The lightest ceremonial error entails disastrous consequences. Legal purity and adherence to ritual are put upon the same level as obedience to the law. The Brahmanical cultus is minutely described in the Brâhmanas and Sutras, which are a sort of liturgical manual. We shall try to bring out from this complicated maze of ritual, the distinctive traits of worship. There were no sanctuaries properly so called. The holiness of the Brahman was such that it sufficed to consecrate any place in which worship was celebrated, so that it was not needful to have a place set apart. Holy men did instead of holy places. The absence of temples prevented anything like regularity in the public worship. "Brâhmanism knows no public cultus; each of its acts, as a general rule, has a purely individual reference, and is performed for the behoof of one Yajamâna, that is to say, of a person who defrays the expense of it. With the Yajamâna there is strictly associated only his wife, or the first of his wives, if he has several (the wife having no rights of worship of her own); and it is only indirectly, by means of certain attendant variations, that the benefit of the rite is extended to the rest of his family, to the people of his household, or the body of his dependents."[2] The domestic ritual embraces the entire life of a Brahman. It includes the sacramental rites accompanying the birth of a child; his initiation, which is a second birth; then all the purifications of the private life, by which every act of it is sanctified, and lastly the funeral ceremonies. There are other rites to be observed by the Brahman, who having reached old age, retires into solitude and lives as a hermit. Codes, such as the Laws of Manu, give an epitome of this ritual, adding to it certain moral injunctions. The part of the ritual connected with the sacrifices is given in fullest detail. The offering of the Soma, which sometimes involves costly solemnities, lasting over several days, is always placed in the foremost rank. Every sacrifice is accompanied by a round of more com-

[1] Barth, "The Religions of India," p. 48. [2] Ibid., pp. 50—52.

plicated observances, and generally animal victims are required. The herds are decimated to supply them. There are even traces in the ritual, of human sacrifices; but these are only the exception, a strange survival, it would seem, of primitive barbarism. The most august of the sacrifices of blood is always that of the horse.[1]

§ II.—The Speculative Evolution of Brahmanism.

All these new modes of worship tended, as we have observed, to exalt the priests and their god Brahmanaspati. It was necessary indeed to justify his supremacy by a religious conception in which he should occupy the foremost place. It was easy to attach such a conception to the speculative portion of the Vedas, which celebrated in their later hymns, the ineffable and mysterious One. This One now became the central figure in the theogony, whereas he had hitherto been scarcely more than a vague suggestion, thrown altogether into the shade by the figures of the living gods of light, to whom the mass of the people clung. It required indeed much patient and skilful effort to bring this metaphysical creation into the foreground, and to substitute for the purple cloud-chariots of the great gods, a cold and formless Divine abstraction. We shall see the Brahmans setting themselves with philosophical determination to achieve this result, but we repeat, they were but prolonging the lines already traced by the Vedic poets in making Brahmanaspati (now changed into Brahma) the symbol of the Divine unity reduced to the most complete abstraction.

It was by laying hold of one of the most daring conceptions in the famous Hymn 129, Book X. of the Rig Veda, that the Brahmans succeeded in making Brahma the first manifestation of the absolute. In that hymn it was said of the hidden principle of things:

> "The Only One breathed breathless by it."

This breath, which is distinguished from the wind—that

[1] Barth, "The Religions of India," pp. 54—58.

is to say, from any natural force—is only that which is called in another Vedic hymn the Divine Atman, the *Semet ipsum*, the hidden principle of the *Ego* and of all that is. This spirit, which breathed forth the soul of the universe, this mysterious Atman, is confounded with Brahma, from whom all beings proceed. The further finite life is removed from this first principle, the more it loses of dignity. Thus the ladder of the universal hierarchy is set up between the gods and men, who are divided into four castes: the Brahmans, whose office is prayer; the military class, who defend the soil; the husbandmen, who till it; and the Sûdras, objects of aversion and contempt, who are doomed to slavery. The ideas of a future life underwent an important change in this new theodicy. The final judgment, dividing the good from the wicked, and relegating the one to the abode of darkness, while the other entered the paradise of Yama, no longer seemed sufficient. The hierarchical scale is reproduced in the penalties of the future life. After a first judgment, the guilty descend again by successive metempsychoses, all the grades of being, only at once to recommence the ascent; while the good and pious rise gradually into the absolute, starting from the point to which their virtue had raised them. The final term for them is absorption in Brahma.

The Brahmans have left some confused attempts at a cosmogony. At one time they refer the origin of things to "a first being conceived as a person, Prajâpati, who, tired of his solitude, emits"—that is to say, draws forth—from himself everything that exists, or who begets it after having divided himself in two, the one half male, the other female. At another time this first personal and creative being is represented as himself proceeding from a material substratum: in the mythic form he is *Hiranyagarbha*, "the golden embryo," *Nârâyana*, "he who reposes on the waters," and *Viraj*, "the resplendent, who issued from the world-egg." Besides these two solutions, there is still a third. Instead of organising itself under the direction of a conscious, intelligent being, the primary substance of things is represented as manifesting itself directly, without the interposition of any personal agent,

by the development of the material world and contingent existences.[1]

At bottom all these theosophies seem to have been traced on "the idea that the principle of life which is in man, the Atman, or self, is the same as that which animates nature."[2]

This favourite thesis of the Brahmans has been treated in all sorts of ways in the speculative portion of their sacred books, and primarily in the Upanishads.[3] We shall give some examples of these lucubrations, the gist of which is always the glorification of Brahma.

In the Chândogya-Upanishad, Indra, the head of the Devas, occupies at first an inferior position. He asks Prajâpati, who represents the supreme Being, wherein man's true self consists. Prajâpati says to him: "The person that is seen in the eye, that is the self." By this person he means, not the organ of vision itself, nor the small figure imaged in the eye, but the real agent of seeing, the being who uses not only the senses, but also the mind, as an instrument. The seer who is in the eye is the being who knows that he knows, and that the human mind, the "eye Divine," is but his instrument. This is the Atman, the self in man, an emanation from the great Atman who is the principle of all things.[4] "The Devas who are in the world of Brahma worship that Self. There all worlds are held by them, and all pleasures. He who knows that Self and understands it obtains all worlds and all desires."[5] Brahma, who is confounded with this supreme Atman, is thus raised above all the earlier gods.

In a dialogue which takes place between Yâgnavalkya

[1] Barth, "The Religions of India," pp. 68—70.
[2] Ibid., p. 71.
[3] In the Upanishads this doctrine of the Atman is largely expanded. Doubtless the curious writings collected under this name are of very various dates, but the most important belong to an epoch anterior to Buddhism. We recognise in them a continuation of the Brahmanic religion. All the questions relating to the Upanishads are exhaustively treated in M. Regnaud's work entitled "Matériaux pour servir à la philosophie de l'Inde."
[4] "Origin and Growth of Religion," Max Müller, pp. 320—327.
[5] Ibid., p. 327.

and his two wives, the latter ask him how they may attain to immortality. The husband replies that that which is really loved in all beings is the Atman, the Self. He says: "Verily a husband is not dear that you may love the husband, but that you may love the Self; therefore a husband is dear. Verily a wife is not dear that you may love the wife, but that you may love the Self; therefore a wife is dear. Verily the Devas are not dear that you may love the Devas, but that you may love the Self; therefore the Devas are dear,"[1] and so on. "When there is, as it were, duality, then one sees the other, one smells the other, one hears the other, one salutes the other, one perceives the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he smell another, how should he see another, how should he hear another, how should he salute another, how should he perceive another, and how should he know another? How should he know him by whom he knows all this? How, O beloved, should he know (himself) the knower?"[2]

A variant reading adds:—"That Self is to be described by 'No, no!' He is incomprehensible, for he is not comprehended; free from decay, for he does not decay; free from contact, for he is not touched; unfettered: he does not tremble, he does not fail. How, O beloved, should he know the knower? Thus thou hast been instructed, and thus far goes immortality."[3]

The Ratha-Upanishad is a dialogue between a young child called Nakiketas and Yama, the ruler of departed spirits. Nakiketas says: "There is that doubt when man is dead, some saying that he is, others that he is not; then I should like to know, taught by thee." Yama replies: "The future never rises before the eyes of the careless child, deluded by the delusion of wealth. *This* is the world, he thinks; there is no other; thus he falls again and again under my sway.

"The wise, who, by means of meditating on his Self, recognises the Old, who is difficult to be seen, who has entered into darkness, who is hidden in the cave, who

[1] "Origin and Growth of Religion," pp. 328, 329.
[2] Ibid., p. 332.
[3] Ibid., p. 332, note 11.

dwells in the abyss, as God, he indeed leaves joy and sorrow far behind.

"That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him alone the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him as his own. But he who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self, even by knowledge. No mortal lives by the breath that goes up and by the breath that goes down. We live by another, in whom these two repose. Well then, I shall tell thee this mystery, the Eternal Brahma, and what happens to the Self after reaching death.

"Some are born again, as living beings; others enter into stocks and stones, according to their work and according to their knowledge. But he, the highest person, who wakes in us while we are asleep, shaping one lovely sight after another, he indeed is called the Bright; he is called Brahma; he alone is called the Immortal. All worlds are founded on it, and no one goes beyond. This is that.

"As the one fire, after it has entered the world, though one, becomes different according to whatever it burns, thus the one Self within all things, becomes different according to whatever it enters, and exists also apart.

"As the sun, the eye of the world, is not contaminated by the external impurities seen by the eye, thus the one Self within all things, is never contaminated by the suffering of the world, being himself apart.

"There is one eternal thinker, thinking non-eternal thoughts; he, though one, fulfils the desires of many. The wise who perceive him within their Self, to them belongs eternal peace.

"Whatever there is, the whole world when gone forth" (from Brahma) "trembles in his breath. That Brahma is a great terror, like a drawn sword. Those who know it become immortal.

"He" (the Brahma) "cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. He cannot be apprehended except by him who says: 'He is.'

"When all desires that dwell in the heart cease, then the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahma.

"When all the fetters of the heart here on earth are broken, then the mortal becomes immortal. Here ends my teaching."[1]

Speculations like these made it easy to cast off the yoke of the old religion. "Know the Atman only, and away with everything else; it alone is the bridge of immortality," says one of the Upanishads.

In such a conception of the cosmogony, nature is clearly reduced to a mere illusion. The finite world no longer exists. "It is the production of the Mâyâ, of the deceptive magic of the god; a mere spectacle, where all is illusion, theatre, actors, and piece alike; a 'play' without purpose which the Absolute plays with himself. The ineffable and the inconceivable is the only real."[2]

The most extreme asceticism is the final term of this evolution. In the state of ecstasy to which it introduces all consciousness of a distinct personality is lost. The system known as the Yoga is a sort of manual of mystic exercises, to throw men into this state of ecstasy, bordering on madness.

There was a reaction against this in the wild idealism of the philosophy of the Vedânta. This was what is called the Sânkhya philosophy, of which Kapila was the author. In this the claims of reason are strongly affirmed. The Sânkhya teaches that there is an eternal duality of soul and matter. Nature is eternal, but without knowledge. The soul is alike eternal, but with the capacity of knowing. All the phenomena are linked in a sequence of cause and effect, and proceed from their two principles—soul and matter. Brute matter is one; the essential soul is divided; it is the compound of the individual souls which are all equal, eternal, and indestructible. Each soul is united to the subtle corporeal element, with which it enters into successive combinations. The aim of human life is to free itself from the body, by virtue of the knowledge which teaches man the independence of the soul in relation to the body, for the bond which unites them is only apparent. The soul must recognise that it is not nature. As he comes to realise the complete independ-

[1] "Origin and Growth of Religion," Max Müller, pp. 333—337.
[2] Barth, "Religions of India," p. 75.

ence of the soul, man is set free. In short, nature, which in the Vedânta appeared as only a transitory mode of the life of the spirit, becomes again a reality in the Sânkhya, although it is in the end to be vanquished by the soul. The natural tendency of the Sânkhya was to materialism and atheism. The disciples of Kapila abandoned in the end the whole Vedic and Brahmanic mythology.

Their doctrine is represented as absolute scepticism, and their morality has been preserved to us in such couplets as these: "So long as life lasts, delight thyself and live well; when once the body is reduced to ashes, it will revive no more." The logical consequence of all this speculative movement was to brand as useless all the rites of worship, and of necessity the priesthood also.

We must draw a distinction between this and official Brahmanism, which gave equal place to the speculative and the practical. Of this system the laws of Manu are the most complete expression. They represent, so to speak, the average religious conception of the period.

§ III.—The Religious Life during the Brahmanical Period.

The Laws of Manu.[1]

Whether the laws of Manu date from a period more or less remote from the Christian era, they are in any case a perfectly authentic monument of the life of the period when Brahmanism had become the predominant religion of the people. We have thus a true representation of the religious life as it was for many centuries, and as it still is in India, for nothing can equal

[1] The Indians have possessed numerous codes of laws described as holy. We shall speak only of the laws of Manu, which are the most important of these codes. Dunker fixes their date as before 600 B.C., on the following grounds: 1. These laws belong to a time when the Aryans had not yet settled on the coasts of Dacca, and this settlement took place about 600 B.C. 2. Buddhism was in existence five centuries before Christ, and it is certain that it was a reaction against Brahmanism as constituted by the laws of Manu. 3. The laws of Manu recognise only the first three books of the Vedas, and ignore the fourth, while the

the immobility of these gentle, dreamy races, so rarely stirred to action.

In the first place, we find in the laws of Manu the result of the speculation of the Vedânta, without the elements which made that system rather adverse than favourable to a sacerdotal religion encumbered with ritual. Religion is placed on the footing which shall be most to the advantage of the god of the priests and of the priests themselves. In its cosmogony the Vedic Pantheon is passed over in silence rather than contradicted. The doctrine of the ineffable unity in which Brahma is swallowed up, is formulated in a popular and almost mythical fashion. In substance it is as follows: The world was plunged in utter darkness, and deprived of attributes. The Lord, existing by himself apart from the external senses, appeared, and made the world perceptible, with its five elements.[1] He whom the spirit alone can perceive, the soul of all beings, displayed his glory. Having produced the waters, he deposited a germ in them. This became an egg, luminous like himself. The supreme Being was born from it under the form of Brahma, the ancestor of all that live.[2] The two parts of the egg form the heaven and the earth. All the principles of the intellectual life proceed from the supreme soul.[3] As the multitude of gods is produced by Brahma, he is at once raised above them all. More than this, the manes, the ancestors of the Brahmans, were born before the gods, and are themselves gods.[4] It was Manu, their own ancestor, who by his austerities produced the gods.[5] By

Buddhist Sûtras quote four. 4. There is no trace in the laws of Manu of the worship of Çiva, mentioned in the Sûtras. Now, according to the testimony of the Greeks, this worship was flourishing in the fourth century B.C. Vishnu is only named once, and that in a part of the book which is doubtful. 5. The names of the kings are the same as in the Vedas, while those of the great epopœias are wanting. Much question has been raised about this remote date of the laws of Manu. They are often referred to a period but little removed from the Christian era. However this may be, the substance of the ideas is very ancient and quite in harmony with the great period of Brahmanism.

[1] "Laws of Manu," i. 6, 7.
[2] Ibid,, i. 4—7.
[3] Ibid., i. 8—14.
[4] Ibid., iii. 201.
[5] Ibid., i. 33, 34.

alternating periods of waking and repose, the supreme Being makes this assemblage of moving and motionless beings perpetually die and live again.[1] This movement of growth and dissolution is like the rotation of a wheel. The end of all being is absorption in the supreme soul.[2] A scale of ever-diminishing emanations runs through the three worlds, the highest, the middle, and the lowest, which are all subject to this same law of subdivision.[3] Souls undergo transmigration after death in a degree proportioned to their guilt. The guilty souls ascend one by one all the rounds of this ladder of transformation, from mere animal existence to the point where their elements become disintegrated, and then they return to the primordial unity.[4]

This doctrine of transmigration is the basis of the profound respect with which all creature life is treated, for souls are concealed in the forms even of the lower animals.[5] As the highest aim of existence is absorption in Brahma, the ascetic and contemplative life is the best that man can lead. The body is indeed but the prison of the soul, which the soul should leave with the same gladness with which the bird takes its flight from the tree.[6] By meditation and contemplation, the spirit becomes freed from all earthly affection, and begins its absorption in Brahma,[7] who, being more subtle than the atom, can only be apprehended by the spirit in a state of ecstasy and contemplation.

The last stage of the Brahman's life is the solitude of the forest, but he must on no account begin with this. His first duty is to perpetuate the holy race, to teach the Divine law, and celebrate the sacred rites. Great importance is thus attached, as we shall see, to the constitution of the family, without which the priesthood would perish, since it is a strictly hereditary dignity, the lines of caste being fixed and inviolable. The laws of Manu exalt to the highest possible point the dignity of the Brahmans. The code of the priesthood interprets in the most exclusive sense, the more or less authentic

[1] "Laws of Manu," i. 57.
[2] Ibid., i. 1-3.
[3] Ibid., i. 23, *et seq.*
[4] Ibid., xii. 3.
[5] Ibid., viii. 306.
[6] Ibid., vi. 7, 8.
[7] Ibid., i. 54.

text of the Vedas, according to which the Brahman was born from the mouth of the supreme god, and the other castes from his arms, thighs, and feet. The Brahman, who came forth from the noblest part of the god, was by this fact constituted lord of all other creatures.[1] He is the incarnation of the justice of the god with which he is finally to be identified.[2] All that exists in the world is at his disposal.[3] Whether learned or ignorant, the Brahman is a great divinity.[4] It is by virtue of his office that the world and the gods exist.[5] His prayers have power to call into being other worlds and other gods.[6] Every offence against him is sacrilege; his sacred character is indelible.[7] Punishment assumes a milder form when applied to his delinquencies.[8] The best portion is always his by right. A Sûdra may not accumulate too much wealth for fear of humbling his superior,[9] and he must always remember that he has been created to do service to his superior.[10] Thus the Brahman may do nothing to raise the Sûdra above his low condition. He is not allowed to instruct him, not even in the ceremonies of expiation, but he may reduce him to slavery.[11] Gifts made to a Brahman have a meritorious value. "All that is given to this venerable man produces good fruit." He has a right to take possession, if necessary by craft or force, of everything needed for the sacrifice, even if for this purpose he has to despoil the house of the Sûdra.[12]

Such were the exorbitant claims of the priestly caste. It simply placed itself above all law; no clergy ever arrogated to itself such privileges.

After the claims come the duties of the priesthood, and first those peculiar to the office. In this part of the laws of Manu the priest appears in a new character, as primarily a doctor of the law. It is logical that this preponderance should be given to religious knowledge, when the divinity himself is an impersonal principle, to which the soul is united by contemplation. This is the undisputed reign of gnosticism. Brahma is rather

[1] "Laws of Manu," i. 99.
[2] Ibid., i. 98.
[3] Ibid., i. 100.
[4] Ibid., ix. 317.
[5] Ibid., ix. 316.
[6] Ibid., ix. 315.
[7] Ibid., ix. 319.
[8] Ibid., ix. 241.
[9] Ibid., x. 129.
[10] Ibid., viii. 413.
[11] Ibid., viii. 414, 417.
[12] Ibid., xi. 12.

an intellectual concept than a living being. He is not a god "to whose knees man may cling," as said Pascal.

The preparation for the office of Brahman consists essentially in the study of the sacred books and of all that relates to the knowledge of the holy. The mere fact of ordination is not enough to qualify a Brahman for his work. A prolonged novitiate is necessary. The young novice prepares himself for the ascetic life, which is the highest term of his calling, by begging his bread,[1] but this is no hindrance to his loading his master with presents.[2] To this master the utmost veneration must be shown, and implicit obedience rendered. "Controlling his body, his speech, his organs of sense, let the novice stand with joined hands, looking at the face of his teacher."[3] It is by unreserved submission that he will be best prepared for union with the Divine being.

His master is truly his father according to the spirit, for he gives him a new birth. "Sacred science is his mother, and the teacher his father."[4]

The sacred cord is the symbol of this new birth, effected by the knowledge of the holy.[5] It destroys all impurity within the novice, as fire devours the tree in the forest. It prepares him for immortality and union with Brahma. The only sure way not to err from the truth is to submit absolutely to the authority of the sacred books, which takes the place of evidence, and is weightier than logic.[6] The decisive interpretation is given by the Brahmans when they assemble to determine the true meaning of the texts.

Beside the reverence due to his master, the novice is to honour all the gods and all his betters.[7]

The time of novitiate passed, the duties of the priest of Brahma begin. Above all things, he is enjoined to live an exemplary life, worthy in its general tenor, and even in the outward seeming, of his high calling.[8] He has three debts to discharge: the study of the Vedas, which is to be carried on throughout his whole course; sacrifice;

[1] "Laws of Manu," ii. 49—51.
[2] Ibid., ii. 245, 246.
[3] Ibid., ii. 192.
[4] Ibid., ii. 145—148.
[5] Ibid., ii. 170.
[6] Ibid., i. 104—108.
[7] Ibid., ii. 206—208.
[8] Ibid., iv. 16—18.

and the begetting of a son. This implies a certain period devoted to family life, but through it all his aspiration is to be fixed on the final term of his probation, the ascetic life of the forest.

We have already spoken of the importance of sacred study, which was not to cease for a day. Let us now say something of the duties relating to sacrifice, before touching on those of the father of the family. Judging only from the outward manifestations of the religious life, one would think that sacrifice had retained the same character as in the earlier period. It is still offered to the ancient gods: Agni, Soma, Indra, Varuna. It is still a sacred aliment, which, after it has passed through the fire, is offered to the gods for the renewal of their strength.[1] The times of sacrifice are the same as of old.[2] The blood of the victim is still poured out, and the immolation of the horse is still the great ceremonial. To this is ascribed efficacy to destroy sin.[3] Yet in reality all is changed. The sacrifice is now far more a purification than an expiation or the mysterious sustenance of the gods. That which has to be purged away is chiefly the earthly existence itself, which is always imperfect from the very fact of its limitation, since there is no real good save in the absolute being, in the ineffable One who is adored under the name of Brahma. The life of the body is in itself a defilement. Hence the rites used at the birth of the child are designed for the purification of its body. The fœtus itself is to be purified by an offering of fire. The tonsure and the sacred cord complete the purification of the novice from any remaining defilements of his birth.[4] It is clearly said that sacred study, pious observances, offerings of fire, offerings to the gods, the procreation of sons, the five great ablutions, and the solemn sacrifices prepare for the final absorption into the Divine Being, which is consummated by the destruction of the body.[5] Nay, more, the study of the law, which holds the first place in this category, may be a substitute for all the other sacrifices, since, by means of contemplation, it

[1] "Laws of Manu," iii. 81, *et seq.*
[2] Ibid., iv. 25, 26.
[3] Ibid., xi. 261.
[4] Ibid., ii. 27.
[5] Ibid., ii. 28.

enables the soul to anticipate the final union with Brahma, on condition, however, that this study be accompanied with great austerities. We have seen how the knowledge of the Vedas is compared to a purifying flame. "All sins committed by men in thought, word, or deed, can be entirely consumed by the fire of their austerity."[1] Sacred formularies are equally efficacious. There is a formula which, repeated three times, purifies the greatest criminal, even if he has stolen gold from a Brahman.[2] The same effect is produced by the utterance of the mystic name of the god, especially if the breath is held in speaking it, as if to symbolise the voluntary annihilation of self.[3] It is said expressly that to murmur thus the ineffable name of Brahma, is a far more effectual means of purification than all ablutions and sacrifices.[4]

The Brahman who retains in his memory the complete Rig Veda would not be defiled by any crime whatsoever, even if he had killed all the inhabitants of the three worlds and accepted food from the vilest of men.[5] Just as a clod of earth thrown into a great lake would disappear, so every guilty act is buried beneath the Veda. It was not possible to exalt the Vedas more highly than this and yet at the same time more completely to belie their spirit by changing the whole conception of worship. What place is there in this new system for that sacrifice of the earth and heavens which is the life of the universe? Here everything centres in the knowledge of the sacred letter and in asceticism, as the means to annihilate the physical life, which formerly was to be fostered and developed that it might feed and brighten the flame of Agni.

The Brahmanic legislation gives some scope, however, for the development of the natural life of the family, since the third great duty of the Brahman is the perpetuation of the holy race. Nowhere in the ancient world is family life placed in such a position of honour as in the laws of Manu. The home is represented as a true sanctuary, where morning and evening the father offers his oblations, by which the whole world is up-

[1] "Laws of Manu," xi. 238—245.
[2] Ibid., xi. 251.
[3] Ibid., xi. 249.
[4] Ibid., ii. 83, 84.
[5] Ibid., xi. 262.

held. Hospitality is raised to the height of a sacrifice. "The fulfilment of the duties of hospitality is the offering to men."[1] There are minute regulations for marriage in the religious ceremonial, and a stern reprobation of its being treated in any way as a matter of bargain between the father of the bride and his future son-in-law.[2]

The union between a young man and maiden, when it is contracted under the inspiration of mutual affection, is celebrated by sacred rites.[3] Prompted by love, its end is the enjoyment of love. "He only is a perfect man who consists of three persons in one—his wife, himself, and his son. The husband is declared to be one with the wife."[4]

Chastity was a primary virtue.[5] With a view to propagating the holy race, a man has the right, and it is indeed his duty, to seek for beauty in his wife. It is said of the Brahman: "Let him take a well-made woman, with a pleasant name, with the bearing of a swan or a young elephant, with fine hair, small teeth and soft limbs."[6] To observe mutual fidelity was the first duty of husband and wife.[7] Marriage was, as a rule, indissoluble. A young girl was given once only in marriage. If she lost her husband, she was not to take the name of another man. "Wherever women are honoured," says the book of the law, "the gods are satisfied; but where it is not so, all pious acts lose their virtue. Every family in which the women are hardly treated soon becomes extinct."[8] Houses upon which the curse of the women rests, because due homage has not been paid them, go to ruin as under the effect of a magic spell. To every family in which the husband delights in his wife, and she in him, perpetual happiness is secured.[9] When the woman is radiant with beauty, all the house is gay also.[10] The woman must be submissive first as a daughter, then as a wife.[11] She must be good-tempered, manage her household economically, and be absolutely faithful.

[1] "Laws of Manu," iii. 70.
[2] Ibid., iii. 27, 30.
[3] Ibid., iii. 32.
[4] Ibid., ix. 45.
[5] Ibid., iii. 33, *et seq.*
[6] Ibid., iii. 10.
[7] Ibid., ix. 101, 102.
[8] Ibid., iii. 55—57.
[9] Ibid., iii. 60.
[10] Ibid., iii. 62.
[11] Ibid., v. 148—151.

Unhappily this high-toned morality was relaxed in practice as far as the husband was concerned. The wife," it is said, "must be invariably faithful, and must revere her husband like a god, even when he has indulged in illicit amours."[1] The happiness of the family is valued at such a price, that even the offices of piety are subordinate to it. Neither sacrifice, nor fast, nor pious observance can avail for the woman like the love and respect of her husband. These sentiments suffice to procure honour for her in heaven,[2] as they have already secured her all respect upon earth. "Way must be made for a woman, as for a king, a bridegroom, or an aged man."[3]

There can be no security for family life without a normal constitution of the State. Thus the Brahmanic legislation determines its organisation with great care and singular wisdom. The principal institution of the State is the monarchy. Its Divine origin is clearly recognised. The king is expressly enjoined to rely upon the Brahmans and to favour them.[4]

The rules laid down for him in the performance of his duties both in peace and war, are based on high-minded and liberal principles. He is never to strike a defenceless enemy.[5] He is the great guardian of justice; this is his true priesthood.[6] "When justice, wounded by injustice, presents itself before the judges, and the judges do not draw out the dart, they are themselves wounded. Justice strikes when it is wounded, and protects when it is maintained.[7] It is the only friend that accompanies man after death.[8] Punishment is a celestial being, created by the gods, in order to ensure to all the possession of their rights.[9] It is a king, full of courage, of sombre hue, but keen eye, which governs the human race, protecting the feeble against the strong. It would strike even the king if he strayed from the path of his duty."[10]

This social morality is based upon a general morality of singular purity, in which we trace the righteous reaction of conscience against speculative errors. The laws of

[1] "Laws of Manu," v. 154.
[2] Ibid., v. 155.
[3] Ibid., ii. 138.
[4] Ibid., vii. 37, 38, 58.
[5] Ibid., vii. 90—93.
[6] Ibid., viii. 311.
[7] Ibid., viii. 12.
[8] Ibid., viii. 17.
[9] Ibid., vii. 14.
[10] Ibid., vii. 17, 28.

Manu do not contain only particular precepts, admirable in themselves, such as those which enjoin the forgiveness of injuries,[1] the generous sharing of the necessaries of life with others, and watchfulness against incitements to evil by which the purity of even a wise man may easily be sullied.[2] These lofty maxims are connected with great general principles for the regulation of the entire life, principles which rise far above the downward religious conception of Brahmanism.

In the first place, the authority of conscience is appealed to in addition to that of the sacred code and of tradition, although the law retains its supremacy, even when it seems to enjoin that which is evil. "The law," we read in one significant passage, "has for its basis the entire Veda, the injunctions and practices of those who possess it, the immemorial customs of the great and good, and in doubtful cases *the sense of inward satisfaction*."[3] We know, indeed, that the written law was too often allowed to overrule the higher promptings of the inward law; but it is nevertheless a great thing that the authority of conscience should have been able to assert itself in the face of tradition and ritual. This authority is unequivocally affirmed in the following passages: "The soul is its own witness and its own refuge. Let us not despise our soul, that unerring witness."[4] "The wicked say to themselves: 'None sees us,' but the gods see them, as does the spirit that is in them."[5] "While thou sayest: 'I am alone,' in thy heart there dwells all the time that supreme spirit, the silent observer of all good and all evil; there is a severe judge; there is a god."[6] Truthfulness is enjoined as a virtue of the first order.[7] All things are determined by the word; from the word it is they all proceed. The rogue who falsifies the word for his own purposes, falsifies the basis of all things. Sometimes the moral idea has enough power to break the fetters of sacerdotalism. Religious observances are declared to be worse than useless, when they are observed from interested motives.[8] A sacrifice is nullified by a lie, the merit of austere practices

[1] "Laws of Manu," viii. 313.
[2] Ibid., iii. 114, *et seq.*
[3] Ibid., ii. 6.
[4] Ibid., viii. 84.
[5] Ibid., v ii. 85.
[6] Ibid., viii. 91.
[7] Ibid., iv. 175.
[8] Ibid., xi. 10.

by vanity, and charitable actions by boastfulness.[1] "Though (by his learning and sanctity) a Brahman may be entitled to accept presents, let him not attach himself (too much) to that habit; for through his accepting (many) presents the Divine light in him is soon extinguished."[2] The very rule of caste seems to give way to a higher nobility. "It is not years, nor grey hairs, nor parentage which impart greatness; he is great who knows the Vedas."[3] "An ignorant Brahman is like an elephant made of wood."[4] There is something even higher than sacred knowledge, since this only confers superiority when it is accompanied with the virtue which resists the impulses of passion. Even with less knowledge of the sacred books, the Brahman who exercises self-control is greater than he who yields to temptation.[5] Forgetting his implacable severity towards all that is outside the holy caste, the legislator, in a sudden access of charity, allows almsgiving even to heretics.[6]

This whole system of morals may be thus summed up: "Contentment, the act of returning good for evil, temperance, purity, repression of that which is sensual, the knowledge of the holy books, union with the supreme soul, truthfulness, and the avoidance of anger—these are the virtues which constitute our duty."[7] Being careful not to hurt any living being, the Brahman should add to his virtue, as the white ants enlarge their habitation.[8] Let him remember that man comes into the world alone, that he dies alone, and receives alone the recompense of his good deeds, and that, in order that he may not have to pass alone through the impenetrable darkness, he must have merit as his companion.[9]

It would be impossible that, in view of this lofty moral ideal, the Brahman should not have also at least an occasional consciousness of sin, and that he should not desire some other expiation than the mere purification of the defilement of the body or the recitation of sacred formulas. The confession of wrong done is indeed pre-

[1] "Laws of Manu," iv. 237.
[2] Ibid., iv. 186.
[3] Ibid., ii. 154.
[4] Ibid., ii. 157.
[5] Ibid., ii. 118.
[6] Ibid., iv. 32.
[7] Ibid., vi. 92.
[8] Ibid., iv. 238.
[9] Ibid., iv. 240, 242.

sented as the first expiation. When it is sincere the man is freed from guilt, "as a snake from its slough."[1] Wrong done to others must also be repaired by restitution of the goods unjustly acquired, as well as by austerities and prayers. In the third place, the offender must repent, and he is only absolved when he says: "I will do so no more."[2] Lastly, he is to rise above mere formalism in the exercises of his devotion. "If, after having made expiation, his mind is still uneasy, let him repeat the austerities (prescribed as a penance) till they fully satisfy (his conscience)."[3]

It must not be forgotten that prayer forms a part of these devotions. We may then venture to believe that there sometimes rose from the lips of the penitent, something like an echo of the sublime penitential hymns of the Veda which we have already cited.

And yet this invocation of the supreme pity died away in empty air, so long as the worshipper of Brahma remained shut up within the narrow circle of his religion. His god did not, like Indra, incline his ear to receive his groaning, for he was lost in the dull void of unconsciousness. All this high religious morality was objectless, since the ultimate ideal was not to live well, but to cease to live at all, the individual losing himself by contemplation and asceticism in the supreme soul, the immutable Brahma. The higher grade of holiness towards which the Brahman was to be ever striving, was the life of the anchorite, for which he was to leave the family home and bury himself in the depths of the forest. Even while living as a husband and father, he is bound often to seek solitude in order to meditate on the future blessedness of his soul, and that he may attain to felicity.[4] When the time so long looked forward to comes at length, he leaves his house, carrying with him a few utensils, keeping silence, all desire dead, and devotes himself to a life of asceticism. He is to meditate in silence and fix his mind on the Divine Being. A hut of earth or the roots of a great tree for his habitation, scanty garments, and absolute solitude—these are the signs which distinguish the Brahman who is aspiring after the final deliverance. He may not

[1] "Laws of Manu," xi. 229.
[2] Ibid., xi. 231.
[3] Ibid., xi. 234.
[4] Ibid., vi. 61, *et seq.*

desire either life or death, but await the moment appointed for him, as a servant waits for his wages.[1] This is the final term of that adoration of Brahma in which all individuality is lost. The fundamental idea of the religion of the Hindoos, long veiled under its brilliant mythology, thus reveals its true nature, and approaches that doctrine of annihilation which is to be its ultimatum, in spite of the righteous protests of conscience.

§ IV.—The Messiah of the Brahmans in the Epic Poems of India.

Brahma, the abstract, motionless god, who rather resembles *no-being* than the principle of life, could not long suffice for the religious needs of the people. In spite of the honour put upon the family life, it was well understood that the final goal to be reached was the stern asceticism of the solitary, who sought to imitate his god by quenching in himself all individual life, and putting away all that forms the charm of existence. The conscience of the people prevailed, as it always does, in the end, and made its claims heard by the leaders of religion, who contented themselves with giving a political and speculative response. They could not return to the gods of the past, to the valiant Indra, Agni, and Soma; but they retained what was compassionate and helpful in their attributes, and tried to perpetuate their better element by ascribing it to other gods, who, if they were not new, were at least so transformed as to be brought as near as possible to poor humanity. Thus was founded the worship of the Divine deliverers in human form, those incarnate gods who, under the names of Çiva, Vishnu, Râma, and Bhagavat, played so important a part in the religious evolution of the Indians, both before Buddhism and after. This cultus was sometimes divided among various sects, each attaching itself to the worship of one of these gods to the exclusion of the rest, or at least placing its particular god so high above his ancient rivals, that he seemed to reign alone. Çiva and Vishnu were by turns the favourite gods of great religious com-

[1] "Laws of Manu," vi. 45.

munities. We shall not follow the complicated history of these sects, because they belong to a later development. The attempt made to unite in one common worship, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Çiva the Destroyer, also belongs to modern history. This essentially metaphysical trinity represents the absolute under three forms, and gives us a sort of triple evolution of the Divine unity.[1] We shall content ourselves with briefly explaining in its fundamental idea, the religious conception by which the Divine incarnations were multiplied, as it comes out in the two most ancient poems of India. Even though they may have been considerably modified in their transmission through various sects, it is beyond question, that they represent a general tendency of the Indian mind, by which the transition was effected from Brahmanism to the laws of Manu and to Buddhism.

Of the two great Indian poems, the Mahâbhârata and the Râmâyana, the former is the more ancient. Without dwelling on the numberless interpolations it contains, we may say there is no certain indication by which to determine the date of its original compilation. It appears to us probable that, in its elementary form at least, it was antecedent to Buddhism, for it contains not a single allusion to it. In any case, in this changeless land, where a century is as a day, the substance of the ideas contained in these two great poems certainly dates from the period when the hearts of men began to be stirred by ardent aspirations after a god less remote, less dreary, than the old Brahma, even before the time had come for openly forsaking his worship. It is to these aspirations that satisfaction is given in the epic poems in which the supreme god appears as a hero. He no longer dwells on high, like Indra, in the bright clouds; he has truly come down to this earth on which we live and suffer and struggle. Truly man, he fights side by side with men and for them; yet he is still the greatest of the gods even in the earthly form which he has assumed in order to accomplish his work of deliverance. He is, indeed, the Messiah of Brahmanic India.

[1] For all this history of the Indian sects, see Barth's "Religions of India."

The human gods of the great poems are completely distinct from Buddha, inasmuch as they do not enter into conflict with the ancient gods. They belong even by their names to the Vedic pantheon, and they leave Brahma to sleep his eternal sleep, without disturbing him at all with the noise of their battles. They take his place as supreme, at least in the direct influence upon hearts and minds, as he himself had taken the place of the gods of the Vedas, whose worship had never ceased, though they had been relegated to comparative obscurity. The revolution was effected gradually and quietly, without struggles or schism.

It is easy to connect with the ancient religion, under its two forms—the Vedic and Brahmanic—the origin of the human gods who henceforth occupy the foremost place. They form at first one and the same divinity under various names. Çiva, Rudra, Râma, are originally only appellations or manifestations of Vishnu. Subsequently, no doubt, Çiva becomes a distinct character and the object of a particular worship. But we find nothing like this in the two great epic poems. In the Mahâbhârata, Çiva is worshipped by the same title as Vishnu; they form one and the same divinity, at once supreme and human. Çiva is hardly mentioned in the Vedas. Yet we recognise him in Rudra, the father of the Maruts, the lightning gods already identified with Agni. He is thus preparing for the formidable part to be assigned to him later, but at this period his consuming flames are for the behoof of man. Rudra-Çiva appears in a new character in the hymn to *The hundred Rudras*, inserted in all the editions of the Yajur-Veda. He is there represented as the god of the people, the patron of all craftsmen, the head of the armies, the god of the brave, whether soldiers or brigands. It only remains to identify him with Vishnu, and he becomes the incarnate god of the Mahâbhârata.[1] We have already seen Vishnu occupying a very exalted place in the Vedas as sun-god. "Friend Vishnu," says Indra to him, "arm thyself, and roll the thunder across the sky. Strike Vritra" (the serpent). His beneficent

[1] Barth, "Religions of India," p. 163.

character was expressed in the prayer: "Grant us thine aid, O swift god. Look upon us with an eye of favour, that we may be enriched." He becomes a human god by being confounded with Krishna, who rapidly rises very high in the Indian pantheon. He is at first simply the disciple of a sage; then he becomes a god of the people, like Çiva, as is shown by the dramatic representations of his adventures given three centuries before Christ. As he becomes more and more identified with Vishnu, he shares in the supremacy of the old solar gods, and in the end concentrates in himself the myths of the fire, the lightning, and the storm. In return, he imparts to Vishnu life and movement. By means of this evolution Vishnu finally becomes pre-eminently the human god, always ready for incarnation. In the Bhâgavad Gîtâ, which is of much later date than the Mahâbhârata and the Râmâyana, he is made to say: "Every time that religion is in danger and that impiety triumphs I issue forth."[1] This is the theory of the Avatâras, or the "Descents," the series of hypostases of the deity in order to assure the triumph of good. Râma is another representation of Vishnu. We shall see how far he assumes the character of a human hero in the poem which bears his name.[2]

At the period of the two great epic poems, the theory of the Avatâras is still in embryo. They are the first popular expressions of the deep-felt need of bringing the god near to man, of making him a sharer in man's conflicts and sufferings, in order that he may give the help without which victory cannot be won. There is as yet no systematised philosophy, for the old Brahmanic idea is retained, though in subordination. The Mahâbhârata requires a submission so absolute to the masters of sacred science, that even that which is evil must be done if so enjoined. The disciple must give to the Brahman part of all he receives. The ascetic lives in solitude in a state of exaltation not to be described.[3] He possesses the

[1] "Bhâgavad Gîtâ," iv. 7, 8.

[2] On this subject of the incarnation, see Barth, "Religions of India," "Hinduism," p. 159, *et seq.*

[3] We quote the Mahâbhârata from M. Fauche's translation, in 10

knowledge of the divine, the supreme good, and by his prayers and austerities he is in a manner raised even above the gods. He reduces the enemy to ashes more readily than Agni himself. All this is done by the mighty magic, the sacramental virtue of the formula. These devotees order by the truth the goings of the sun, and uphold the world by their penitence. Sacred science is omnipotent. If a man had committed more sins than all the rest of the world put together, he could be carried safely across this ocean of sins in the bark of divine knowledge.[1]

We find in the Mahâbhârata the cosmogony of the laws of Manu. The eternal Brahma is represented as the supreme certainty, the eternal light, comprehending in himself the birth, death, and resurrection of all that live. It is true that in another passage, Vishnu is in his turn represented as the eternal, absolute one, the god of being and not-being at the same time; the lord of all that moves and of all that moves not. This identification of Brahma with Vishnu is indeed quite in harmony with the old syncretism of the Vedas.[2] The solar myths constantly reappear with their brilliant metaphors, as in the fine passage in which the two Acvins are compared to two skilful weavers, weaving alternately the white of the dawn and the black veil of night, which they spread over the sun. The solar myths are constantly confounded with the epic story of the battles between the Pândus, the sons of the Aryans, and the children of Karna. It is a renewal under another form of the eternal struggle of light with darkness, with its counterpart upon earth, in which those who represent the principle of light are incessantly combating the sons of the demons. The Mahâbhârata rings from end to end with the clash of arms in giant conflicts, which are described with as much minuteness of detail as exaggeration of the number and strength

volumes. The poem is divided into eighteen parts, each with its distinct name, as the *Vana-parva*, "Forest Chapter"; *Bhîshma-parva*, "Book of Bhîshma"; *Karna-parva*, "Book of Karna," etc. The numbering of the series recommences with each part.

[1] Bhishma-parva, v. 1028.

[2] Ibid., see opening verses.

of the combatants. We must not look for plan or sequence in these extravagant poems, in which the genius of the Indian race displays its singular brilliance in the description of nature, but allows its vivid imagination to run riot, breaking through all definite and recognised forms. The poetic soul of the Indian seems to delight in those limitless aspects of nature which overpower it with their grandeur. What can be more sublime for example, than the description of the sea, in the Mahâbhârata? It is represented as the vast cave of the waves, its waters ever surging and restless, peopled with fishes, sharks, and living creatures innumerable. It is the mother of all gems, the monarch of the rivers, the habitation of the flames of hades, at once awful and divine, the bottomless laboratory in which the ambrosia of the gods is prepared. Its tumult strikes terror into the hearts of all that live, as, driven by the stormwind, it dashes itself against the shore, rears itself up in fierce agitation, and dances, making its waves clap their hands. It is the glorious couch of Vishnu, when, on the eve of the world's renovation, he begins to taste the ecstasy of absorption. Upon its breast floats the lotus from which emerges Brahma, the father of all that live.

The great forest which is the constant theatre of the complicated action of these poems, is described in a still more majestic manner. Is it not, indeed, the most faithful image of India, with its depths of darkness under the shade of the thick trees, with its intersecting glades, and the mysterious whisperings among its leaves, as the wind sweeps through them like the breath of the Infinite? In spring, the forest is the garden of India, all perfumed with flowers, when the great trees rain down blossoms, or bend beneath their weight of fruit. It seems like the unfurled banner of the Lord. A soft, balmy wind plays in the branches. The forest, clothed anew in living green, re-echoes to the song of birds and murmur of innumerable bees. All creatures are intoxicated with the wine of new life. Deer, buffaloes, tigers, roam through the woods. The elephant seeks his mate in the forest depths; and soft wavelets of sound thrill through the lotus leaves as they open to the sun.

It is in this enchanted spot that the Mahâbhârata places the idyll of Sakuntalâ, the betrothed of the young king. Forsaken by him under the influence of an evil spell, she only regains his affections after the most cruel ordeals. The characters thus sketched are truly human. Nothing could be more pathetic than the picture of Savita, weeping over the corpse of her husband, taken away from her by Yama, and winning the promise that he should come back by such lamentations as these:—

"No joy for me without my husband. Without him, I desire not heaven; I desire not happiness; I desire not life." Over the mortal remains of her father and mother, the young girl cries: "They live in me."

Even in this poem we find an appeal to the voice of conscience as the highest authority. Sakûntalâ, the deserted wife, remonstrating with the king Dushyanta for his evil deeds says: "If you think I am alone, you do not know that wise man within your heart. He knows of your evil deed—in *his* sight you commit sin. A man who has committed sin may think that no one knows it. The gods know it, and the old man within."[1]

Feelings of gentleness and consideration for others blossom out under the influence of the more human gods. To them is due the respect shown for human life, even in the tumult of the battlefield. The last utterance of the dying warrior whose passing is compared to the setting of the sun, is a word of pardon. "Let the father be given back to the son, and brother to brother."

Another warrior says: "He who gives a trembling fugitive into the enemy's hand, will see his son die before the time. Turn not away from friend or servant, nor from any who asks help of thee."

We must now look more closely at these human gods, whom the religious consciousness of India made for itself, in its alarm at feeling itself so far from Brahma. It is he himself who in the Mahâbhârata proclaims the incarnation of a god-deliverer. He says: "It is impossible for the Asuras and even for the gods to overcome the evil genii. This is the means I have chosen to subdue them. Vishnu,

[1] Mahâb., v, 3015-16.

the four-armed, the bravest of warriors, shall come down and do this work.[1] "Be thou born upon the earth," says Brahma to Vishnu, "and beget heroes to be thy companions in the family of monkeys."[2] Monkeys represent the good genii, the allies of the holy race in their battles with powerful foes. Vishnu soon ceases to be the mere minister of the will of Brahma. He becomes himself under the name of Çiva, as well as under his own name, the cause of causes, the most powerful and subtle of beings, the sovereign of the gods.[3]

"I am happy," exclaims one warrior, "though I am banished from heaven. I have seen the giver of all gifts, under one of his forms, and touched his hands." Vishnu speaks thus of his incarnation: "Though I was not born and my life is immortal, I, the sovereign of all beings, command my own nature, and am born of myself by magic, whenever there is a failure in virtue and increase of vice. Then I produce myself for the preservation of the good and the destruction of the wicked and the restoration of truth.[4] I am not visible to man. I have neither beginning nor end; I am before the gods, the typal man, the Lord.[5] The wicked despise me in the body which I have assumed. I am the soul which is in all beings. I am in all sacrifices, in all prayer."[6]

The worshipper of Vishnu falls at his feet adoring in him the universal god. "Thy beams, O Brahma," he exclaims, "consume the whole universe. Thou art Yama, Agni, Varuna, Prâjapati."[7]

"Thinking thee my friend, a man like myself," says his companion in arms, "I called thee abruptly, Ho! Krishna![8] and behold this man apparently like his fellows, was in truth the supreme god, came down into the world of men, to be born again upon earth and to overcome the Asuras."[9]

"Where Krishna is, there is duty, there is victory!" The sons of Pându are sustained by the alliance made

[1] Vana-parva, v. 15-932.
[2] Ibid., v. 159-33.
[3] Karna-parva, v. 1558—1562.
[4] Bhishma-parva, v. 999, 1000.
[5] Ibid., v. 1136, 1145, 1173.
[6] Ibid., v. 1223, 1224.
[7] Ibid., v. 1285.
[8] Ibid., v. 1287.
[9] Ibid., v. 2990.

with him. "He about whom thou dost ask me, the leader of the holy armies, is the eternal god, Çiva himself."[1] He has made himself the son of an earthly king in order to crush the enemies of the holy race. The great god mounted in the chariot of the world, with the four Vedas for steeds, and by whose dart the Asuras have been pierced through, has made himself upon earth the driver of the war-chariot of the Pândus.[2] "Thanks to his valour, the heaps of slain foes are like high mountains upheaved from their foundations, with their trees, their rocks and flowers. There lie great elephants wounded, bellowing and bleeding. Beside them are the corpses of heroes, and the ground is covered with the slain like the sinuous trail of a serpent."[3]

This allusion to the serpent carries us back to the cosmical idea of the eternal conflict between darkness and light which is always in the background of these battles between the holy race and its foes. The victorious people know well that he in whom they triumph is not a human hero, but a son of god who has put the battalions of the enemy to flight. They see in him the adorable lord of the universe, with the power of three worlds at command, sending forth his arrows."[4]

Has the Indian religion really gained anything by this incarnation of the supreme god? Has he thus become more real, more living? We think not. In his earthly manifestation, he is after all only a changing form of the hidden, invisible, immutable god. This changing form seems to have gained a certain individuality, by becoming human, but it is only a semblance, just because it is changing, and to-morrow some other form equally evanescent will take its place. We never for a moment arrive at a distinct moral personality. It eludes us just as we are about to approach it. Man cannot unite himself truly to this impalpable divinity; he can no more grasp it than the hand can grasp water. His own personality is after all only a semblance; it also is but a changing form of the one substance in which all individuality is absorbed. Hence the hope of immortality, after being

[1] Bhishma-parva, v. 3009.
[2] Karna-parva, v. 1524, 1525.
[3] Ibid., v. 4898, 4906.
[4] Ibid., v. 1568.

admirably expressed, ends in mere absorption, as in this significant passage of the Mahâbhârata: "Just as in the present life, we pass first through childhood, then maturity, then old age, so death gives us another body. Thus the wise man does not trouble himself. The arrows cannot pierce the soul, nor the fire burn it, nor the waters drown, nor the winds dry it up; it is imperishable. It is not born; it does not die; it is eternal."[1] What does this mean but that the soul is only an ephemeral manifestation of the one substance? Thus, at death it puts on a new body like a garment, and enters the vortex of metamorphoses, unless it has attained here below by sacred science to the ineffable union with Brahma.

It follows that the Messiah of the Indian epic is not a true deliverer since he is not a real person. Hence his work has not the character of a true redemption. It is a system of magic in which there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural. This divine magic is constantly intervening in the life of nature and of man; indeed it is itself an element in the law of perpetual transformation. It bears no resemblance to the intervention of a free Being for the reparation of wrong in the world. In fact, there is nothing wrong. We have simply the repetition upon earth of the cosmic struggles going on under the laws of fatality. The free action of man is distinctly denied. When he does not obey the will of a master, he is governed by some antecedent necessity in his life. He feels himself to be the toy of an unknown power, and he is in reality only one of the transitory modes of the universal life. There is but one thing for him to do, namely to aspire to lose himself in the infinite, and to extinguish those restless desires, the tendency of which is to reinforce the individual life. Hence we do not wonder when in the midst of these martial strains, at a moment when it would seem as if there was everything to stir the pulses of action, we find a strange disgust with life which becomes the keynote of Buddhism. There must be a drawing back from outward things, as the tortoise shrinks back into

[1] Bhishma-parva, v. 1157.

its shell, that the mind may be wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the absolute Being. The final stage is one of complete passivity, all action is left behind, even desire is dead.[1] This brings us to the verge of Buddhism.[2]

[1] See the first part of the Bhishma-parva, v. 1178.

[2] The same conclusions are arrived at in the Râmâyana, which is more tender and human in its strains than the Mabâbhârata. We find there the same incarnation of the supreme god with perhaps a fuller participation in the affections and sorrows of our human life; the same victorious conflicts, symbolising cosmical crises; and the same ascetic pantheism underlying the whole conception of things. The Bhagâvata Purâna, translated by Burnouf, is of much later date, and treats of nature as a lying illusion. It is the seductive Mâyâ, the false courtesan, whose eyes are like stars, and whose magic spells fill the world with trouble. She represents material life with its miseries and the bondage of the creature. The soul is attacked by the five senses as by five brigands in the forest of existence. The purpose of Vishnu in his incarnations, in which he changes his appearance like an actor in a masquerade, is to free us from this material life. He has taken it upon himself as one may use one thorn to extract another. This is Buddhism in its essence. All that is wanting now is the legend and the name of Çâkyamuni.

CHAPTER V.

BUDDHA.[1]

BUDDHISM is the last term in the logical development of the religion of India, though Brahmanism has never ceased to exist side by side with it; and has even in the end, expelled it from the land which was its cradle, while leaving it in possession of a great part of the Oriental world. The religion of Buddha is only the gradual development of the dominant idea of the national cultus, under the combined influence of an ascetic piety, and a subtle and profound system of metaphysics. The nihilism which is its final utterance, really underlies all naturism even when it assumes the brilliant garb of the Vedic poetry. To seek in nature the Divine Absolute, is to enquire of her for that which she has not to give; it is a quest that can but end in disappointment, for all that is simply natural fades and perishes. The ephemeral life of nature, is in comparison with that which the soul

[1] It is not possible to take in a note even the most cursory glance at the literature on this subject. I shall merely indicate the books to which I refer most frequently. *Max Müller*, "Chips from a German Workshop," vols. i. ii. *Burnouf*, "Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhisme Indien," 1848. *Barth*, "The Religions of India." *Barthelémy St. Hilaire*, "Le Buddhisme et sa religion," 1862. *Sénart*, "Essai sur la religion de Buddha, son caractère et ses origines," 1875. "Non-Christian Religious Systems. Buddhism," by F. W. Rhys Davids, London, 1882, an excellent *résumé* taken from many sources. "History of Buddhism. Çakyamuni," by Mrs. Mary Summer, with preface and index by MM. Ed. Foucaux and Ernest Leroux, 1874. We must also mention as most valuable, the delineation of Buddhism given by M. Renan in his new "Etudes d'histoire religieuse," 1884. "Le Buddhisme et le Christ," by *Alfred Porret*, is an eloquent parallel drawn between the two Messiahs. On the modern development of Buddhism, see "Manual of Buddhism in its modern development," translated from Singhalese MSS. by R. Spence Hardy, 1853. The papers on Buddhism by M. L. Feer, in the *Asiatic Journal*, are of great interest. See also *Oluenberg*, "Buddhism."

athirst for the infinite, seeks in her, as empty nothingness. This changing, perishable being, ever looking forth with a new face from its successive metamorphoses, is equivalent to not-being. We have seen Brahmanism removing out of their place the gods of light, of quickening and consuming fire, and lastly the god of the eternal conflict, the valiant Indra, and substituting for them the silent, inert Brahma, the ineffable One, in whom all individual life is to be absorbed by means of asceticism and contemplation, after passing through the final ordeals of metempsychosis which only prolong its agitation to no purpose. Nothing could be a more hopeless prospect than this of the mysterious absorption of being in the infinite, which is not even annihilation. Moreover, before arriving at this submergence in the dark and fathomless path of asceticism and contemplation by the abyss, the worshipper of Brahma is plunged into the vortex of life on earth, as the head of a family bearing his part in the turmoil and suffering incident to such a lot. If these varied exercises were designed, as in the religions of Egypt and Persia, to prepare him for a blissful eternity, there would be a counterbalancing good. But it is not so. Men are like the ephemera that sport for a moment in the rays of the sun, only to die of inanition with the first chills of evening. Life is thus deprived of all end and aim, and is only one long abnegation of that which for an instant it has been permitted to enjoy. We can well understand then how it should come to be regarded as an evil in itself, an evil without a remedy; and how the only gospel for such a people to whom existence was a curse, would be the gospel of annihilation.

This was what Buddha proclaimed to a race sick to death of the ill of living. If he had been content to preach annihilation under the form of a cold and abstract metaphysical doctrine, he would not have found the way to the hearts of the people, and held thousands of disciples hanging on his lips, disciples who in their turn were to win over whole nations. But his teaching was first of all a *life*. He was in his own person an incarnation of his doctrine; it was kindled at the flame of his loving heart; it was realised in his life of purity and devo-

tion, for he lived out the ideal which he set up. It is vain to attempt to reduce him to a mere personification of the old solar myths. One feels that the vast movement which bears his name, must have originated in a personal influence, in a true type of humanity, who could speak to the heart, and whose image, full of moral beauty, stands forth in relief against the phantasmagoria of a complicated and often absurd mythology. However delusive in the end the consolation he brought, it was a great thing to have possessed the consoler himself, to have seen and heard him, or at least, to know that he had been seen and heard, that he had trodden with his own feet the rough ways of human life. He responded to the universal heart-felt cry of humanity for a deliverer who should come near to it, one who should weep its tears and bear its burdens. There had been an attempt to meet this same need in the religious movement of which the great Indian poems are the expression. Vishnu and Çiva were made to descend from the heights of heaven to do heroic battle as men against the enemies of the holy race. But they bore too close a resemblance to their worshippers, being subject like them to all the impulses of passion. Their only weapons were the vulgar arts of magic, which astonished without elevating the soul. Buddha, who is of humbler origin, since at least in the primitive form of the tradition concerning him, he is but an ordinary man, is endowed nevertheless with moral excellence which assures to him a far greater power over hearts. He is at once nearer to man and more exalted. This moral excellence comes out not only in his unsullied purity, but also and above all in the spirit of his life and work, which was always that of the most tender charity towards all living beings. To him may be applied the description of One greater than he: he was truly a man "moved with compassion." The philosophical outcome of his teaching is indeed dark and hopeless, since it consists in representing being as in itself an evil; but if the moral inspiration of a doctrine be high and holy, it can outweigh mistake and error. Thus the terrible doctrine of predestination in the sixteenth century produced admirable results, because the inspiration of this

stern system was the ardent desire to reassert the sovereignty of God as opposed to the insolent pretensions of the creature. In like manner, doctrine of despair though Buddhism was, the charity which animated its founder, conjured, at least in part, its evil influence, and won for him a great following of the suffering and the despised. How could these but rally round a master, who, without violently breaking the barriers of caste, practically overstepped them, and addressed himself to every man as a brother, to whom he brought a word of deliverance? Mournful as was theburden of this doctrine, it at least recognised the equality of men.

Nothing could be less revolutionary than the teaching of Buddha, in its original form. He connected it closely with the past, only breaking the husk which enclosed the fruit, not snapping the branches which bore it; for this divine fruit had ripened well upon the great tree of the religion of his forefathers, beneath which so many generations had found shelter. Buddha did not smite it with the hatchet; the severance came later.

In the history of Buddhism we must carefully distinguish the early times when everything came under the teaching and personal influence of the master, from its later developments. We find in this period all the characteristic traits of Buddhism, but its metaphysical system, though already formulated, is presented only in a poetic garb. Over it is thrown a veil woven of the fair flowers of parable. It is not possible indeed at any stage in the history of Buddism to free it entirely from the legendary element, and so to determine exactly what comes from Buddha himself. But this is of little moment. The legend, at least in its early development, does not distort his physiognomy or his doctrine. It belongs to the primitive Buddhism of the creative period which went far beyond the life of the master. The legend gives the impression produced by him, and forms an essential part of this great religious movement. Even in much later times, we trace in the developments of this legend (whenever they are not mere travesties), clear indications of genuineness, and we may safely accept it as an illustration of the true Buddhist doctrine. It is of great importance

to distinguish between this doctrine and the mythological accretions by which it was soon overlaid; as also that we should not confound its first purely secular realisation, with the monastic institution which both consolidated and narrowed it. We must be careful moreover, not to assign to the time of its origin, the constitution of Buddhism into a state religion under Açoka, although this was the most generous and liberal of state religions. It would be as great a mistake to identify the Buddhism of Buddha with that which became a state religion four centuries before Christ, as it would be to confound the gospel of Jesus Himself with the doctrine of the great councils of the fourth century. With these reservations, let us proceed to derive from the texts, some idea of primitive Buddhism.

§ I.—Primitive Buddhism.[1]

1. Buddha was born at Kapilavastu, the capital of the kingdom of that name, at the foot of the mountains of Nepaul. His father, the king of Kapilavastu, was one of the family of the Sakyas, and belonged to the clan of the Gautamas. "His mother was Mâyâdêvî the daughter of

[1] The principal authorities on Buddhism are the following:

1. Southern authorities: The Pitakas or collections which are supposed to have formed part of the Canon fixed at the council of Patna under Açoka, 260 B.C., which presupposes a much earlier date for the writings composing them.

2. Northern sources: The principal are the Lalita-Vistara, translated from the Sanscrit by M. Foucaux (Musée Guimet, tome vi. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1884). As a Chinese translation of the Lalita-vistara was in existence in the first century A.D. its composition may be assigned to a yet earlier date. We take most of our quotations from the Lalita-vistara, the "Lotus de la bonne loi," translated by Burnouf (Paris, 1885) which also forms part of the sacred books of the North. For the biography of Buddha, as far as it can be freed from the overgrowth of legend, I have availed myself largely of Mr. David's excellent *résumé*, which seems to make a judicious selection among the more ancient Sûtras. Here internal evidence plays a legitimate part. The simplest is obviously the oldest.

We may refer lastly to the "Sept Suttas Pâlis tirés du Digha-Nikaya," M. P. Grimblot. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1871). This gives a confirmation of the atheism of Buddha, and of his negation of all immortality, especially in the Brahma-Jâla-Sutta, which contains a sort of excommunication of the Brahmanic doctrines on these two points. (See the Introduction by M. Gogerly.)

king Suprabuddha. Buddha was therefore by birth of the Kshatriya or warrior caste, and he took the name of Sâkya from his family and that of Gautama from his clan."[1] He was subsequently called Siddhârtha (he whose objects have been accomplished). Endowed with all the gifts of genius and physical beauty, he easily outstripped all his comrades and even his masters in feats of bodily and intellectual strength.

But from his childhood he was possessed by a deep melancholy from which nothing could divert him. Those around could see no cause for it, but it was in truth the sorrow of the world, the insoluble problem of life which was weighing on his soul. In the hope of turning the current of his thoughts, he was married to the beautiful Gopâ, the daughter of Dandapâm. The marriage proved one of the happiest, but Buddha remained as he had been before, absorbed in meditation on the problems of life and death. "Nothing is stable on earth," he used to say, "nothing is real. Life is like the spark produced by the friction of wood. It is lighted and it is extinguished—we know not whence it came or whither it goes. It is like the sound of a lyre, and the wise man asks in vain from whence it came and whither it goes. There must be some supreme intelligence where we could find rest. If I attained it, I could bring light to man; if I were free myself, I could deliver the world."[2] The king, who perceived the melancholy mood of the young prince, tried everything to divert him from his speculations, but all was in vain.

At length the decisive day came. One morning, when the young prince with a large retinue was driving through the eastern gate of the city, he met on the road an old man, broken and decrepit. One could see the veins and muscles over the whole of his body, his teeth chattered, he was covered with wrinkles, bald, and hardly able to utter hollow and unmelodious sounds. He was bent on his stick, and all his limbs and joints trembled. "Who is that man?" said the prince to his coachman. "He is small and weak, his flesh and his blood are dried

[1] Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop, vol. i. p. 210.
[2] Ibid., pp. 210, 211.

up, his muscles stick to his skin, his head is white, his teeth chatter, his body is wasted away; leaning on his stick he is barely able to walk, stumbling at every step. Is there something peculiar in his family, or is this the common lot of all created beings?"

"Sir," replied the coachman, "that man is sinking under old age. His senses have become obtuse, suffering has destroyed his strength, and he is despised by his relations. He is without support and useless, and people have abandoned him, like a dead tree in a forest. But this is not peculiar to his family. In every creature, youth is defeated by old age. Your father, your mother, all your relations, all your friends, will come to the same state. This is the appointed end of all creatures."

"Alas!" replied the prince, "are creatures so ignorant, so weak and foolish, as to be proud of the youth by which they are intoxicated, not seeing the old age which awaits them. As for me, I go away. Coachman, turn my chariot quickly. What have I, the future prey of old age, what have I to do with pleasure?" And the young prince returned to the city, without going to his park.[1]

Twice more he drove out in his chariot, only to encounter on each occasion, some wretched, suffering fellow-creature. The first was a man at the point of death, parched and wasted with fever. "Alas!" exclaims Buddha, "health is but the sport of a dream, and the fear of suffering must take this frightful form. Where is the wise man who, after having seen what he is, could any longer think of joy or pleasure?"

The next time as he was driving to his pleasure garden through the western gate, the prince saw a dead body on the road, lying on a bier, covered with a cloth. The friends stood about crying, sobbing, tearing their hair, covering their heads with dust, striking their breasts, and uttering wild cries. The prince again calling his coachman to witness this painful scene, exclaimed: "Oh! woe to youth, which must be destroyed by old age! Woe to health which must be destroyed by so many diseases! Woe to this life, where a man remains so short a time!

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. pp. 211, 212.

If there were no old age, no disease, no death; if these could be made captive for ever!" Then betraying for the first time his intentions, the young prince said: "Let us turn back, I must think how to accomplish deliverance."

A last meeting put an end to his hesitation. He was driving through the northern gate on the way to his pleasure gardens, when he saw a mendicant, who appeared outwardly calm, subdued, looking downwards, wearing with an air of dignity his religious vestment, and carrying an alms-bowl.

"Who is this man?" asked the prince.

"Sir," replied the coachman, "this man is one of those who are called blikshus or mendicants. He has renounced all pleasures, all desires, and leads a life of austerity. He tries to conquer himself. He has become a devotee. Without passion, without envy, he walks about asking for alms."

"This is good and well said," replied the prince. "The life of a devotee has always been praised by the wise. It will be my refuge, and the refuge of other creatures; it will lead us to a real life, to happiness and immortality."

With these words the young prince turned his chariot, and returned to the city.[1]

His resolution was taken—kingdom, glory, power, wife, all must be abandoned, while he shut himself up to lead in solitude the life of an ascetic.

So far he had not gone in practice beyond the ideal of the Brahmans, who looked upon the life of the anchorite as the final goal to be reached. But he had already risen to a much fuller and higher conception of the religious life than theirs. He saw more clearly than any before him, the intensely sorrowful side of life. To him it appeared indeed only as a transparent veil cast over the death to which it leads, and which is therefore the only abiding reality. Hence he was not long satisfied with the teaching the Brahmans had to give him either at Vaisâti or at Râjagriha. Having learnt all that the most illustrious Brahmans of the day could impart, he went away disappointed. In leaving them he still adhered to his faith

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. pp. 213, 214. The whole of this narrative is given in the Lalita-vistara," c. xiv.

in the virtue of asceticism, but he soon discovered that this also was vanity, at least under the idea then entertained of it; for it was supposed to be a means of acquiring merit and power over outward things. Buddha felt that he must go further than this in self-renunciation. He therefore gave up his exercises, and was at once deserted as an apostate by his five remaining disciples. He now began to elaborate his own system. Lost in deep meditation, he descended every step in the ladder of existence, till he reached the point where it is lost in the darkness of the absolute void. To him the supreme deliverance seemed to be the conviction that nothing has any reality; that gods, men, all beings in heaven and earth, are but a vain show, the foam upon the wave. Henceforward, in order to attain to salvation, existence must be regarded as a fatal illusion; nay more, the very consciousness that it is so must be lost in the utter vacuum of absolute annihilation. It was from the moment when he arrived at this knowledge that he claimed the name of Buddha, the Enlightened; for he was about, by his teaching, to illuminate in some sort the vasty deep in which all existence revolves, but of which man must become conscious, in order to escape from the mirage of this mortal life. "The union of the three worlds is destroyed as by fire, through the pangs of sickness and old age. The world having no protection, is consumed by the fire of death. The creature does not flee to save himself; in his infatuation he only buzzes about like a bee in a bottle!" This is the revelation of which Buddha was the apostle.

Before entering on this strange mission, he had to pass through a supreme moral conflict under the tree of temptation—the mystical fig-tree which was to play so important a part in the Buddhist mythology of later days. Under the name of the Bo-tree or tree of wisdom, it became to Buddha that which the cross is to Christians. In this solemn and crucial vigil, he was assailed by all the memories of his brilliant youth. The prestige of his royalty, the smiles and caresses of fair women, all that life has to offer of glory and pleasure, passed before him in a delicious and alluring dream. All day he battled with the false enchantment, and when night fell he was vic-

torious. "He had grasped, as it seemed to him, the solution of the mystery of suffering, and had learned at once its causes and its cure. He seemed to have gained the haven of peace, and in the power over the human heart, of inward culture, and of love to others, to rest at last on a certitude that could never be shaken."[1]

He said:

> "I now desire to turn the wheel of the excellent law,
> For this purpose I am going to the city of Benares,
> To give light to those enshrouded in darkness,
> And to open the gates of immortality to men."[2]

In this desire to comfort and deliver, this vast pity for all suffering existence, this burning charity, lay, as we have already said, the secret of Buddha's power. In this the genius of his heart comes out as much greater than that of his head. His absolute pessimism and boundless nihilism might easily have led to selfishness and indifference to the sorrows of others. He might well have said: Of what avail is it to concern myself for these myriads of insignificant beings, who only appear for a few short moments on the illusive surface of things? The life of the world is but a lightning flash in an unending night. Why not leave men to their brief illusion? It will soon be over, after giving as much joy as sorrow to those who are deluded by it. Such is most frequently the conclusion of our Western pessimsm, but such was not Buddha's. Heart-struck with the horrors of our wretched existence, he could not leave his brethren a prey to its cruel deception. If he could not draw his pitying love from any higher source, since he recognised no great First Cause of being, he drew it from his own full heart. He was fired with an earnest desire to enlighten the ignorant of all classes. He was not satisfied with imparting to them his doctrine, although he himself had found in it the secret of deliverance. He had proved by experiment the futility of a stern, pitiless ascetism; and he had compassion on the poor, the lowly, and the suffering. This compassion is explained even from his own peculiar point of view. As every evil comes from the conscious-

[1] "Buddhism," p. 40. [2] Ibid., p. 43.

ness of existence, and as suffering, no less than pleasure, stimulates this consciousness, everything must be done to soothe it to rest, as the surest way to lessen the woes of mankind. Thus this apostle of annihilation was the gentlest, the most kindhearted of masters, even devoting himself by preference to the classes that had so long endured the cruel contempt of the Brahmans. It must not be supposed that he repelled those who came to him by presenting to them abruptly the sternest aspects of his doctrine. He imparted his teaching in poetic form, so as to make it popular before he showed what were the ultimate issues involved in it. The enchantment of his tender and humane teaching is poetically described in the following passage taken from one of the Sûtras of the following age: "The evening was like a lovely maiden; the stars were the pearls upon her neck, the dark clouds her braided hair, the deepening space her flowing robe. As a crown she had the heavens where the angels dwell; these three worlds were as her body; her eyes were the white lotus flowers, which open to the rising moon; and her voice was, as it were, the humming of bees. To worship the Buddha, and to hear the first preaching of the word this lovely maiden came."[1]

This initial teaching prepares the way for the final deliverance, by teaching man to escape from the dominion of the senses and to apprehend the "four noble truths with which his enfranchisement begins. These are: 1st *Suffering or sorrow.* Birth causes sorrow; growth, decay, illness, death, all cause sorrow; separation from objects we love, hating what cannot be avoided, and craving for what cannot be obtained, cause sorrow; briefly such states of mind as co-exist with the consciousness of individuality, with the sense of separate existence, are states of suffering and sorrow.

"2nd. *The cause of suffering.* The action of the outward world on the senses excites a craving thirst for something to satisfy them, or a delight in the objects presenting themselves, either of which is accompanied by a lust of life. These are the causes of sorrow.

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 46.

"3rd. *The cessation of sorrow.* The complete conquest over and destruction of this eager thirst, this lust of life, is that by which sorrow ceases.

"4th. *The path leading to the cessation of sorrow* is the noble eightfold path briefly summed up in the description of a virtuous life.[1]

At the head of the way of deliverance stands the "Middle Path" with its eight steps: "(1) right belief; (2) right feelings; (3) right speech; (4) right actions; (5) right means of livelihood; (6) right endeavour; (7) right memory; (8) right meditation."[2]

By meditation man enters on the "noble path" of deliverance, which terminates in his exemption from all illusions. This end is, however, only attained by slow degrees and in passing through four stages which are, so to speak, the four great phases of the spirit.

First. *Conversion,* which frees us (1) from the delusion of self; (2) from doubt as to the Buddha and his doctrines; (3) from the belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies. Better than universal empire in this world, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all worlds is this (threefold) fruit of the first Path."[3]

The second step may also be taken by those who reserve for themselves the possibility of returning to the world.

Second. *The path of those who will only return once to this world.* The converted man free from doubt and the delusions of self and ritualism, succeeds in this path, in reducing to a minimum, lust, hatred and delusion.

Third. *The path of those who will never return to this world;* in which the last remnants of sensuality and malevolence are destroyed; not the least low desire for oneself or wrong feeling towards others can arise in the heart.

Fourth. *The path of the holy ones,* more exactly *worthy ones, Arahats;* in which the saint becomes free from desire for material or immaterial existence; from pride and self-righteousness and ignorance.[4] He is now free from all sin; he sees and estimates all things in this life at their true value. Evil desires of all kinds being rooted up from his

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 48.
[2] Ibid., p. 47.
[3] Ibid., p. 108.
[4] Ibid., p. 108-9.

mind, he only experiences right desires for himself, and tender pity and regard and exalted spiritual love for others. "As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son; so let there be good-will without measure among all beings. Let good-will without measure prevail in the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. If a man remain steadfastly in this state of mind all the while he is awake, whether he be standing, walking, sitting or lying down, then is come to pass this saying, Even in this world holiness has been found."[1]

This state—the highest attainable in this life—leads to Nirvâna, that is, to the extinction of all trouble in heart or mind, consequently the extinction of being. It is the indispensable condition of that extinction, and is really indistinguishable from it, for its essence consists in proving for oneself that nothing exists. To recognise that there is nothing, is to sound the depth of things, to enter into annihilation. "The wise man finishes by extinguishing himself, like the flame of a lamp."[2]

All this teaching of Buddha's would have been without significance if it had not been based upon a metaphysical conception. It is impossible not to trace back to him what may be called the Buddhistic philosophy, at least in its essential elements; otherwise his preaching of annihilation would have no meaning. Nothing can be more complicated than his anthropology, which is devoid of all moral unity. "Man consists of an assemblage of different properties or qualities, of which the principal are these: *material* qualities; *sensations;* abstract *ideas; tendencies* of mind, and mental *powers*."[3] "The first group, *material qualities*, are like a mass of foam, that gradually forms and then vanishes. The second group, the *sensations*, are like a bubble dancing on the face of the water. The third group, the *ideas*, are like the

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 109.

[2] Nirvâna, which represents annihilation or the absolute nothing, is unquestionably the logical consequence of the teaching of Buddha, alike from a moral and metaphysical point of view. The solid argument of M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire on this point has not been shaken. See Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 254.

[3] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 90.

uncertain image which appears in the sunshine. The fourth group, the mental and moral *predispositions*, are like the plantain stalk, without firmness or solidity. And the last group, the *thoughts*, are like a spectre or magical illusion. It is repeatedly and distinctly laid down in the Pitakas that none of these *Skandhas* or divisions of the qualities of sentient beings is the soul."[1] The substance, the life, the individual being is only the effect of ignorance; and as life, as being is the great evil, it is of primary importance to destroy ignorance by means of the true doctrine to which man only rises by meditation.

But this is not enough. The essence of life is not only a false notion; there is also inclination, feeling, desire. Now these are the consuming fires which destroy our peace and keep us from that solitary contemplation the end of which is Nirvâna. It is not enough, therefore, to free the mind from error; the flame of desire also must be quenched. Hence the importance of morality and the place it occupies in the teaching of Buddha, though it has no distinct or metaphysical status. This morality, as M. Renan has well observed, does not rest upon the categorical imperative, for in order to this, it would be necessary that the absolute should have an existence, at least for the conscience; and it has no such existence. Individual morality is simply the extinction of all individuality, it is moral suicide. It is therefore in reality, a morality of self interest, since it seeks only its own good. This at least is its final term. Nevertheless, as we have seen, it becomes charity by the manner in which it regards the relation of men among themselves. It breathes a tender pity for their illusions, which it seeks to dispel, and for their sufferings which it would fain soften in order to dull the consciousness of individual existence.

Buddhism does indeed recognise a connection between moral cause and effect. A man certainly reaps that which he has sown. On this is based one of its mysteries, the doctrine of *karma*. "This is the doctrine that, as soon as a sentient being (man, animal, or angel) dies, a new

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 93.

being is produced in a more or less painful and material state of existence, according to the *karma*, the desert or merit of the being who had died." . . . "The *karma* of the previous sentient being then determines the locality, nature and future of the new sentient being."[1] This is indefinitely repeated till all desire, all consciousness is quenched, when the blessedness of Nirvâna will be attained.

The moral teaching of Buddha remains his best title to honour and the real secret of his power. Though he keeps the extinction of sentient life always in view as the goal of all endeavour, he commences with precepts which while they tend in this direction (since all are designed to produce absolute quiescence), are also of general application. When Buddha represents Nirvâna as the result of continence and purity, he directly helps to promote a most excellent good. He says:

"The real treasure is that laid up by man or woman
Through charity and piety, temperance and self-control.
The treasure thus hid is secure and passes not away;
Though he leave the fleeting riches of this world, this man takes with him
A treasure that no wrong of others, and no thief can steal.
Let the wise man do good deeds—the treasure that follows of itself."[2]

Again:

"For never in this world does hatred cease by hatred,
Hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature."
"As the bee injuring not
The flower, its colour or scent,
Flies away, taking the nectar;
So let the wise man dwell upon the earth."
"One may conquer a thousand thousand men in battle,
But he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor."
"Let a man make himself what he preaches to others;
The well-subdued may tame others, oneself indeed it is hard to tame."
"Let us live happily then, not hating those who hate us,
Let us live free from hatred among men who hate."[3]

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 101.
[2] Ibid., p. 127.
[3] Ibid., p. 129, 130.

What wisdom there is in such words as these:

"Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, 'It cannot overtake me.'
As the waterpot fills by even drops of water falling,
The fool gets full of sin, ever gathering little by little."
"He who formerly was heedless, and afterwards becomes earnest,
Lights up this world, like the moon escaped from a cloud."[1]

One is astonished to find in this Buddhist system of morals, precepts touching the family life, which must have appeared to its apostles a miserably low state of existence. And yet it enjoins the child to respond to the love of its parents, lending them all necessary help; it charges the husband to cherish the wife and to be faithful to her; the wife to love her husband and to be hospitable and chaste; the master to be watchful over the well-being of his servants, to apportion the work according to their strength, to tend them in sickness, to share with them unusual delicacies, and to give them occasional holidays. Obviously we have here only the preliminary steps to the "Noble Path" into which the feet must be directed as soon as possible. This elementary morality is summed up in the eight following precepts.

1. One should not destroy life.
2. One should not take that which is not given.
3. One should not tell lies.
4. One should not become a drinker of intoxicating liquors.
5. One should refrain from unlawful sexual intercourse—an ignoble thing.
6. One should not eat unseasonable food at nights.
7. One should not wear garlands or use perfumes.
8. One should sleep on a mat spread on the ground.[2]

Although the more excellent way was not closed to any, it seems nevertheless, that from the first, Buddha instituted the order of mendicants. This was not a new priesthood, or an exclusive caste, for it was open to all who made themselves worthy.

The master had proclaimed religious equality in a more admirable manner. "The gift of the law," he said, "sur-

[1] "Buddhism," p. 130. [2] Ibid., p. 139.

passes all gifts, its sweetness excels all sweetness, its delights surpass all delights. The extinction of all inclination, of all desire, banishes pain. It is not by birth that one belongs to the lower class; it is not by birth that one is made a Brahman. It is by his deeds a man is degraded to the lowest class; by his deeds also he becomes a Brahman."[1] Buddha did not apply this mighty spiritual law only to the Brahmans from whom he had severed himself, but also to his own followers.

"What is the use of platted hair, O fool?
What of a garment of skin?
Your low yearnings are within you!
And the outside thou makest clean."[2]

Nothing could be more unlike the original mendicant societies than the rich and powerful monasteries of modern Buddhism. The intention of the founder was that these mendicants should realise not the superiority there is in learning, but in holiness. As there is no official status for a priesthood to mediate between men and the deity, and to offer him sacrifices of propititation, so the Buddhist monk neither binds nor looses. His is only a moral influence. He is enjoined to content himself with small alms, and to think them, however small, greater than he deserves. His life is to be love.

"The mendicant who, though receiving little,
Thinks not his alms are less than he deserves,
Him the very gods will magnify
Whose life is pure, who is not slothful,
The mendicant whose life is love,
Whose joy, the teaching of Buddha,
He will enter the tranquil lot;
Nirvâna's bliss, where the Sanskâras end.
Let his livelihood be kindliness, his conduct righteousness.
Then in the fulness of gladness, he will make an end of grief."[3]

To be eligible for the order of mendicants, a man must be free from contagious disease, he must not be either a slave or a soldier; he must be in a word, master of himself, and must have obtained the consent of his parents. At the end of eight years, the candidate makes this

[1] Renan, "Études d'histoire religieuse," p. 33.
[2] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 155.
[3] Ibid., p. 154.

prayer to the initiated: "Have pity on me, lord, take these robes, and let me be ordained that I may escape from sorrow and experience Nirvâna."[1] Then he takes a vow to fulfil all the commandments and to observe all the rule of the monastic life. Chastity, poverty and obedience are required of him. The great punishment is exclusion from the order.

The extensive development of the Buddhist monastic system belongs no doubt to the following epoch. The life of the novice and of the monk was then placed under strict rule. The former had to sweep his own dwelling, to seek his daily food, and to devote himself to meditation. When he had carried flowers to the holy images—the only rite of his cultus—he made his round as a mendicant and spent the rest of his time in study and meditation. He had to confess his faults to his superiors. The initiated passed their life in meditation, concerning which the regulations were very minute. A sort of mystic ladder was set up before the mind of the anchorite, and this ladder he was to climb step by step. The theme of the first meditation was love. In this the Buddhist monk included all living things and blessed them. The second meditation was one of pity, in which he laid upon his heart the burden of the sorrows of the world. The third meditation was on joy, in which the mendicant was to think of the gladness and prosperity of others and rejoice in their joy. The fourth meditation was on impurity, in which he represented to himself "the vileness of the body, and the horrors of disease and corruption; how it passes away like the foam of the sea, and how by the continued repetition of birth and death, mortals become subject to continual sorrow." The fifth meditation was on serenity, wherein the mendicant thinks of all things that worldly men hold good or bad; power, oppression, love and hate, riches and want, fame and contempt, youth and beauty, decrepitude and disease, and regards them all with fixed indifference, with utter calmness and serenity of mind."[2]

We are thus brought to the brink of the silent abyss of Nirvâna which is the final goal. The language used

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 159. [2] Ibid., p. 171.

by Buddha in his dying hour to the first mendicants trained in his own school, shows that the spirit of these monastic institutions was caught from him: "O mendicants! thoroughly learn and practise and perfect and spread abroad the law thought out and revealed by me, in order that this religion of mine (literally, this purity) may last long and be perpetuated for the good and happiness of the great multitudes, out of pity for the world, to the advantage and prosperity of gods and men. What is that law? It is the four earnest Meditations, the four great Efforts, the four roads to Iddhi,[1] the five moral Powers, the seven kinds of wisdom, and the noble eight-fold Path."

To these multitudes Buddha unsparingly devoted himself after his arrival in Benares and entrance on his public ministry. It was for them that he embodied his grand thoughts in the form of impressive and pathetic parables. The old Sûtras give us an echo of some of his sermons.

"Once seated on the Elephant Rock, near Gaya, with some new disciples who had been worshippers of Agni, (the sacred fire), a fire broke out in the jungle on the opposite hill. Taking the fire as his text, the Teacher declared that so long as men remained in ignorance they were, as it were, consumed by a fire—by the excitement produced within them by the action of external things. These things acted upon them through the five senses and the heart (which Gautama regarded as a sixth organ of sense). The eye, for instance, perceives objects; from this perception arises an inward sensation, producing pleasure or pain. Sensations produce this misery and joy, because they supply fuel as it were to the inward fires of concupiscence, anger and ignorance, and the anxieties of birth, decay and death.

"The same was declared to be the case with the sensations produced by each of the other senses. But those who follow the Buddha's scheme of inward self-control, —the four stages of the path whose gate is purity and whose goal is love, have become wise. The sensations

[1] The supernatural powers acquired in a certain condition of trance.
[2] "Buddhism," p. 172.

from without no longer give fuel to the inward fire, since the fires of concupiscence have ceased to burn. True disciples are thus free from that craving thirst which is the origin of evil. The wisdom they have acquired will lead them on, sooner or later, to perfection. They are delivered from the miseries which would result from another birth, and even in this birth they no longer need the guidance of such laws as those of caste and ceremonies and sacrifices, for they have already reached far beyond them."[1]

Two of the most famous of Buddha's parables strikingly resemble, in more than one feature, those of the Sower and the Prodigal Son in the Gospel. "Faith," said the Teacher, "is the seed I sow, and good works are as the rain that fertilises it. Wisdom and modesty are the parts of the plough, and my mind is the guiding rein. I lay hold of the handle of the law; earnestness is the goad I use, and diligence is my draught ox. Thus this ploughing is ploughed, destroying the weeds of delusion. The harvest that it yields is the ambrosia fruit of Nirvâna, and by this ploughing all sorrow ends."[2]

The parable of the Prodigal Son given in the "Lotus de la bonne loi," clearly does not belong to the primitive period of Buddhism, but it bears none the less the genuine impress of its prevailing inspiration. In the midst of many wearisome details, comes out the image of the father full of compassion for the son, who, after leaving him has fallen into abject misery, while the father himself is living in wealth and plenty. He bemoans himself in a piteous manner that he, now old, broken down and ready to die, cannot find his son to make him the sharer of his goods; when, without knowing it, his son comes back to the threshold of his father's palace, in vile raiment and hoping for nothing but the pauper's portion. His father, who has recognised him, cries out in his joy: "Lo, I have found him who is to inherit all that is mine. I thought of none but him. And now he is come of his own accord, and I, I am old and bent!" The reconciliation does not take place immediately, however.

[1] "Buddhism," p. 59, 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

The father wishes to prove the wanderer, and so he sets him to the most menial of tasks, that of sweeping up the refuse. At length after twenty years of this hard service, the father clasps him to his arms. "Thou art my son," he exclaims, "and all that I have is thine." But the son still stays outside the palace feeling his poverty. This is a sure proof that the ordeal is no longer needed. The father calls together all his relations, and pointing to the beggar, says: "This man is my beloved son. It was I who begat him. For fifty years he disappeared from this town. Far and wide have I gone seeking him; I came back here, and lo! I have found him. He is my son and I am his father. All this wealth is his." The son falls at the father's feet, saying: "Here am I then in possession of all these treasures!"

The explanation of the parable does not come up to the pathetic beauty of the narrative. It means simply that the disciple of Buddha begins with the study of the lower laws which constrain him to the humblest offices, but that in the end he becomes a partaker of the supreme wisdom. "The master of the world, in order to prove us, does not tell us at once the true meaning of his words. He gives his treasures to those who have subdued their sinful inclinations."[1]

The parable of the three chariots symbolises the same fatherly compassion. There is a father who can find no other way of saving his children from a burning house, than by giving them three chariots. The burning house is the world which is being consumed by the flaming anguish and distress arising from birth. The unhappy inhabitants of the burning house, in their eagerness for play, do not heed the danger. They play on and take no alarm. Buddha rescues them by giving them three cars of deliverance. Only the best among them choose the chariot of contemplation.[2] Elsewhere the hearers of the good doctrine are compared to various plants of the earth which all drink the same water from heaven, for the law is one.[3] The most beautiful of these parables is that of the precious pearl. It is thus summed up: "We

[1] "Lotus de la bonne loi," c. iii. [2] Ibid., c. iii. [3] Ibid., c. v.

bear concealed within us the jewel of truth. We forget it, like a man carrying a ring hidden in a knot tied at one extremity of his outer garment. He thinks no more of it and believes himself a beggar. He is content with just a morsel of bread a day, till a friend reminds him that he is the possessor of a precious stone. Thus do we fail to know the supreme good which we bring with us from previous states of existence."[1]

Whether or not these parables were spoken by Buddha himself, they are none the less in the spirit of his teaching, and they help us to understand its attractiveness and popularity. But again we say the great charm lay in himself and in his moral suasion. From the time he entered on his apostolate, he lived for nothing but his mission. Nothing could be imagined more pure and noble than this life of devotedness, of generous inspiration and holy activity. He desired no other triumph than to know that good was done, and the truth proclaimed free from all admixture of passion. His brow was crowned with an august serenity. This comes out very clearly from all the Buddhist legends, obscured as they are by spurious additions.

Accompanied by the disciples who had gathered round him at Gaya, Buddha repaired to the environs of Râjagriha, the capital of Magadha or Behar, in the western valley of the Ganges. He commanded his disciple Kâsyapa to declare in his name that if he rejected the sacrifice of Agni, it was because he had come to see that men must not only renounce the allurements of sense, but also sacrifices. This is the only way to attain to the ineffable peace in Nirvâna, where there is no more birth, or old age, or death. Gautama himself confirms the words of Kâsyapa. He leaves an impression of admiration and almost of enthusiasm on the Rajah and his people. It must have been at this time that he codified his teaching in the assembly of his first disciples. To those among them who complained that they were despised by the Brahmans for their miserable life, he replies that they have nothing to seek but the right way, that they have

[1] "Lotus de la bonne loi," c. v.

no other weapon at their command but persuasion, and that they can only gain adherents to their cause by the proclamation of the truth for the good of all.

The most touching episode of this period of his life is his interview with his father Suddhodana at Kapilavastu. Suddhodana implores him to visit his native town and not to neglect his father's hoary hairs. Gautama yields to his entreaty, but he takes up his abode in a cave near the town, and only comes forth to beg from door to door. On hearing this, his father hurries indignantly to him and asks why he does him this dishonour. "It is the custom of our race," replies Gautama. "But are we not of an illustrious race?" rejoins his father, "of a race that was never known to beg?" "You and your family may be descended from kings," replied Buddha, "but for myself I am descended from the old prophets, who always begged their bread. When a man has found a secret treasure, it is his duty to give his father his most precious jewel." This jewel was his doctrine. He had the joy of converting his father as well as Yasodharâ, the wife of his youth, who had never ceased to love and to lament him.[1]

During the years which followed, Buddha pursued his holy calling, devoting the month of flowers to meditation, and the rest of the year to teaching. When he felt his end drawing near, in the village of Vaiçâli, he gathered his disciples around him and delivered to the Mendicants, the charge we have quoted as the institution of their order.

He then proceeded to Kusinâgara, one hundred and twenty miles from Benares, and passed the night in a cave on the banks of the river. Ananda, his beloved disciple, who is, so to speak, the St. John of the Indian Messiah, received his last utterances. At the close of this conversation Ananda broke down and went aside to weep. "I am not yet perfect," he sobbed, "and my teacher is passing away, he who is so kind." But Gautama missed him, and sending for him, comforted him with the hope of Nirvâna, repeating what he had so often said about the impermanence of all things. "O Ananda,

[1] Lotus de la bonne loi," p. 64—66. Foucaux says that Gautama had three wives—Gopâ, Yasodharâ, and Utpalavarnâ!

do not let yourself be troubled, do not weep. Have I not told you that we must part from all we hold most dear and pleasant? No being, born, or put together, can overcome the dissolution inherent in it. No such condition can exist. For a long time, Ananda, you have been very near to me by kindness in act, and word, and thoughtfulness. You have always done well; persevere, and you too shall be quite free from this thirst of life, this chain of ignorance."[1]

The disciple found his best consolation in carrying on the work of the master by scattering his teaching far and wide. It was indeed one of the noblest features of Buddhism that it was so largely a religion of propagandism. In this, it was faithful to the lofty spirituality of its principle which raised it above all distinctions of class and nation, so that its concern for man was purely for man as man, needing to be raised from his low estate. Its primary inspiration was charity, pity for the unhappy creature man, whom it yearned to deliver from his miserable condition by imparting to him the true knowledge, and thus setting him in the way to Nirvâna. It may be said that this missionary spirit was an essential element of Buddhism, and we know to what an extent it was successful, since in the end whole nations accepted it as the law of their life.

The *novissima verba* of the master sum up his whole teaching. "Mendicants," he said, "I now impress upon you, the parts and powers of man must be dissolved;[2] work out your salvation with diligence." Shortly after uttering these words he became unconscious and in that state passed away.[3]

Gautama, was, to the end, a man of peace. His hand was not lifted against any, and yet he made all things new by the strange and powerful influence he exerted. He reminds us of one of those south winds full of faint

[1] "Lotus de la bonne loi," p. 81.

[2] Ibid., p. 83.

[3] The date of his death has been determined by means of three inscriptions of the Emperor Açoka. From these we gather that the thirty-seventh year of Açoka's reign was the two hundred and thirty-sixth since the death of the master, which gives us an approximate date 482—472, B.C.

sweetness which sometimes blow from the desert. We read in the Lalita-Vistara, "From east to west the air thrills with the accents of Buddha, a sweet melodious sound which goes straight to the heart."[1] Such is indeed the strange morbid fascination of this teaching, which, while it leads to annihilation, points the way in a garb of beneficence and love. The "wheel of the law" which Buddha turns, revolves only in a vacuum; it is the dull round of a life without thought, desire, affection, utterance.[2]

He places upon his brow the diadem of the great Deliverer. He looks upon all beings with the love of a father for an only son, and holds out to them the key of the only true knowledge, by which they are to be set free from all sorrow. But the satisfaction he promises is to be realised only in annihilation.[3]

This is the goal of all this high moral teaching. Herein lies the hopeless paradox of Buddhism. The way is better than the end. "Fortunately the millions who embraced the doctrine of Buddha, and were saved by it from the depths of barbarism, brutality and selfishness, were unable to fathom the meaning of his metaphysical doctrines. The Nirvâna, to which they aspired was only a relative deliverance from the miseries of human life."[4]

§ II.—Development and Transformation of Primitive Buddhism.

Buddhism rises before us, like a building in which story after story is added on the same foundation. At first the human side is most prominent. Buddha appears primarily as a master, like one of ourselves, who allures us to follow him by the way of moral purity and meditation into the blessed Nirvâna. We have connected with this inaugural period, everything in the Buddhist documents which bears this impress of humanity unobscured by mythological overgrowths. The second period in the develop-

[1] Lalita-Vistara, p. 332.
[2] Ibid., p. 351.
[3] Ibid., p. 361.
[4] Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 251.

ment of the legend seems to us marked by the extraordinary exaggeration of the part of Buddha as Messiah. This process is already traceable in the Lalita-Vistara. He is there no longer merely the son of a king. His actual life was preceded by numberless existences in which he had already accomplished his mission as a deliverer. "It is handed down as a tradition among the gymnosophists of India, that he was miraculously conceived, and was brought forth by a virgin from her side."[1]

His future glory is announced by a great Rishi (or seer) who, like another Simeon, blesses the child of miracle. It was said that "by him, the Water appearing in the midst of the fires of sin devouring the world, the Light appearing in the darkness of the world's ignorance, the Ship appearing amidst the perils of the ocean of human misery, the Liberator of those enchained in the bonds of sin, the Physician of those tormented by decay and disease—by him would be obtained the truth which would be the salvation of sentient beings."[2]

The Buddhist legends soon began to add to the touching story of the three meetings which determined the young prince to abandon his royal estate. He is represented as wooed into a life of solitude by the incantations of numberless Buddhas, his forerunners and compeers. From the four points of space, they implore him to leave his palace and flee into the desert. Their songs contain the whole doctrine which he is to preach, and are far more profound and metaphysical than the more ancient Sûtras.

"Go speedily," say they, "take thy place beside the best of trees, and attain to immortality. In millions of previous existences hast thou given up that which cost thee dear—gold, precious stones, thy hands, thy feet; thy beloved sons, thy kingdom, without anger or hatred in thine heart against those who asked of thee the sacrifice. Thou hast pardoned thy murderers. Numberless are the forms which thy heroism has assumed."

The celestial Buddhas reveal to him afresh the deep hidden reason of the doctrine of final annihilation. "Every substance," say they, "must perish in the end;

[1] "Buddhism," p. 183. [2] Ibid., p. 187.

no composite body has any permanence." In early life, those who are beautiful are loved and desired. When old age and sickness have destroyed the glory of the body, they are forsaken, as the hart forsakes the dried-up stream. Death bears them away, like a river carrying down a pine tree in its swirling waters. Man goes away alone, followed by the fruit of his own works, which leave him with strength spent. Composite bodies being by nature weak and dependent are swept away like loose soil in times of much rain. They are inert and empty, like the empty hand held out to deceive a child. All composite bodies proceed from primary and secondary causes. Just as where there is a seed, there is a bud, though the seed is not itself the bud, so that without the one the other would have no existence, so though the substance has no proper durability, it goes on without interruption. Composite bodies are the result of ignorance and have no real existence.[1]

The celestial choir makes touching appeals to the young prince. "From the cloud of mercy" it prays, "send down the refreshing, peace-bringing shower. Do not neglect the miserable, the poor, the afflicted. Gather them together, O Conductor of men! That thou mayest appease the passion and restlessness of those who are in the body, lead them to the other side of the ocean of pure existence, where they may dwell in quietness and peace, free from the fever of living. Do not pass by those who are tormented with hatred and envy. Let the world be established in patience. Let the minds of thy creatures become so absorbed in meditation that they may understand that into this country where thou dwellest, joy cannot enter."[2]

Buddha, on leaving his family, sojourns for a little time with an illustrious anchorite; but the disciple soon gets beyond his master and discovers that asceticism itself is but vanity.

The temptation under the sacred Bo-tree or tree of wisdom, is magnified into a pretentious myth by which it loses much of its moral beauty. The fundamental principle

[1] "Lalita-Vistara," pp., 156, 157. [2] Ibid., p. 158.

of his doctrine presents itself to Buddha with new precision. "On account of ignorance," says Buddha in one of the discourses that appear in the Sanyutta, as translated by Rev. D. J. Gogerly, "merit and demerit are produced; on account of merit and demerit, consciousness; on account of consciousness, body and mind; on account of body and mind, their organs of sense, touch (or contact); on account of contact, desire; on account of desire, sensation (of pleasure or pain); on account of sensation, cleaving (or clinging to existing objects); on account of clinging to existing objects, renewed existence (or reproduction after death); on account of reproduction of existence, birth; on account of birth, decay, death, sorrow, crying, pain, disgust, and passionate discontent. Thus is produced the complete body of sorrow. From the complete separation from and cessation of ignorance, is the cessation of merit and demerit; from the cessation of merit and demerit is the cessation of consciousness; from the cessation of consciousness is the cessation of (the existence of) body and mind; from the cessation of (the existence of) body and mind is the cessation of (the production of) the six organs; from the cessation of (the production of) the six organs is the cessation of touch; from the cessation of touch is the cessation of desire; from the cessation of desire is the cessation of (pleasurable or painful) sensation; from the cessation of sensation, is the cessation of cleaving to existing objects; from the cessation of cleaving to existing objects is the cessation of a reproduction of existence; from a cessation of a reproduction of existence is the cessation of birth; from a cessation of birth is the cessation of decay. Thus this whole body of sorrow ceases to exist."[1]

It follows that the basis of the whole pyramid of being rests upon ignorance, and crumbles away as knowledge takes the place of ignorance.

Thus in his holy vigil, Buddha was brought to see that even knowledge must be destroyed, or must at least be recognised to have no true existence. "As a successful warrior sees all the army of the enemy put to the rout,

[1] "Manual of Buddhism," R. Spence Hardy, pp. 406, 407.

so the Buddhas see natural corruption, desire, anger, the offspring of ignorance, put to flight like thieves who escape with what they have stolen. The thirst for existence, and even existence itself has been quenched. The well-woven tissue of reasoning with the thread of thought running through it, has been completely consumed, so that no vestige remains. The great fire of passion with its accompanying smoke of logic has been put out. The great enemy who troubles man from the very moment of his birth has been destroyed."[1]

"After the four stages of meditation are passed, the Buddha (and every being is to become a Buddha) enters into the infinity of space, then into the infinity of intelligence, and thence he passes into the region of nothing. But even here there is no rest. There is still something left—the idea of the nothing in which he rejoices. That also must be destroyed, and it is destroyed in the fourth and last region, where there is not even the idea of a nothing left, and where there is complete rest, undisturbed by nothing or what is not nothing."[2]

It is not enough that Buddha has found the great consolation for himself, it must be communicated to men. "Show to all men the path of peace," say the Buddhas, his predecessors. "Have pity, O guide, on this erring world, which has wandered from the path of Nirvâna. Open wide the doors of full deliverance. Be full of compassion for miserable creatures! Arise, O conqueror; shine forth like the full moon after an eclipse. Bring gods and men into the full Nirvâna!"[3]

Although the actual history of Buddha has been greatly exaggerated and obscured by mythical elements, the primary idea of this great movement is retained and comes out with even added lustre, caught from the same fire of universal compassion. The repetition of Buddha's favourite formulas is a part of his method. It is ever the great wheel of the law turning in the infinite void.

The mythological side of Buddhism has received countless accretions in the course of time. Buddha has been

[1] "Lalita-Vistara," p. 307.
[2] Max Müller, "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i. p. 234.
[3] "Lalita-Vistara," pp. 331—333.

divided into thousands and hundreds of thousands of Buddhas, who preceded him but who were nevertheless in permanent communication with him. This multiplication ever going on in fantastic proportions, is designed to exalt more and more the greatness of the master, as though indefinite subdivision were not of necessity a diminution. The numerous pre-existences of Buddha are really so much taken from his greatness. They show, after all, that he has not truly attained Nirvâna, since he has to begin to live again. One is surprised to find it said that "Buddha also was tossed about in this troublesome world, after having been born into the midst of the degradation of the creatures, and having previously taught them the great law of peace."[1]

If he had found this law for himself and for others, why must he start again on the quest? The miserable life of men reaches backward in periods or *Kalpas* which include hundreds of thousands of years. And in spite of the consolation imparted by the teaching of millions of Buddhas, it has no guarantee that its misery may not be prolonged through the countless *Kalpas* of the future.

It needs then that the healthful rain of the law should be ever falling upon a land consumed with the flames of desire, and where birth still brings old age and death. The successive manifestations of Buddha are an avowal of their failure. Not only can humanity not succeed in curing the ills of life, it cannot even die outright. Annihilation, which should be the end of all chimeras, is itself only another illusion. These doubts must have crossed the minds of the followers of Buddha, but they have left no trace except in the writings of some of their deeper and more subtle thinkers.

The powerful organisation of the Buddhist monastery, with its assertion of inflexible authority, long maintained the unity of doctrine by tabooing awkward questions and reasonable doubts.

We have already spoken of the order of Mendicants constituted by Buddha himself. It exercised an ever-growing influence. The Mendicant or Buddhist monk,

[1] "Lalita-Vistara," p. 34.

became a person of supreme importance. He received his teaching direct from the Buddhas, who made him hear the deep quiet harmony of their voices, that they might lead him more quickly than any other creatures whose heart is broken by the sorrows of this earthly life, into the supreme calm of Nirvâna.[1]

Those who embraced a religious life were not allowed to wear any dress except rags collected in cemeteries, and these rags they had to sew together with their own hands. A yellow cloak was to be thrown over their rags. They were to cut close the hair and beard, and live in forests, not in cities, and their only shelter was to be the shadow of a tree. There they were to sit, to spread their carpet, but not to lie down even during sleep. Some gave abundant alms, others taught the law of progressive annihilation.

The great difference between the Buddhist monk and the Brahman was, that the former sought his disciples in all classes, and attached no merit or supernatural efficacy to the practices of asceticism. In speaking of the Brahmans the Buddhist says: "They take that to be a refuge which is no refuge, and that for a benediction which is no benediction.[2]

We find no trace of any sacerdotal rites anong the Buddhist Mendicants. They are neither thaumaturgi nor priests, and lay no claim to be mediators between God and man. The god himself indeed has no real existence. The Buddhist monk is a penitent and a preacher. Nothing can be more simple than his worship. It consists in reciting a sort of office, presenting an offering of flowers, and keeping lamps burning before the image or the shrine of Buddha. Though poor as individuals, the Buddhist Mendicants accepted wealth for their monasteries. The large properties which they thus held collectively, enabled them to erect splendid monuments commemorative of the life of the Master.

Buddhist monasticism became a great institution. The ideal of the life is beautifully rendered, as we have already said, in the following lines:

[1] "Lalita-Vistara," p. 6. [2] "Lotus de la bonne loi," p. 205.

"That Mendicant whose life is love,
Whose joy, the teachings of Buddha,
He will enter the tranquil lot,
Nirvânâ's bliss, where the Sanskâras end." [1]

The rainy season was spent in the monastery. At its close the Mendicants dispersed through the country to carry on their mission.

The most important events in the history of the Buddhist monasteries are the three great Councils which fixed their doctrine. The first was held near Râjagriha in the year following the death of the Master. Five hundred members are said to have there met in council.

It is impossible to say precisely what was decided upon, or to what extent the tradition was then fixed. The second Council took place at Vaisâli a hundred years later. In this, questions of monastic casuistry seem to have been the chief subject of discussion.

The keen controversies to which they gave rise, led to two more conflicting Councils. The last of these excommunicated the more rigid party. The third great Council was held at Patna under the Constantine of Buddhism, King Açoka, who three centuries before Christ, about the year 250, made Buddhism a veritable state religion. The grandson of King Chandragupta, who had driven the Greeks out of India and defeated Seleucus on the banks of the Hyphasis, he embraced the Buddhist religion, which was the more attractive to him because he himself was not of noble race.

The Council of Patna, at which many thousands were present, lasted seven months. The doctrine and rules of the Buddhist religion were revised and codified. The king himself promulgated its decisions as the only ones in harmony with the sacred tradition which was of supreme authority. A catalogue of sacred books was drawn up.

Açoka has preserved for us in monumental inscriptions engraved on the rocks in many parts of India, the faithful expression of the religious ideas which he wished to promulgate. In them we find, as might be expected, a Buddhism much broadened and toned down, to meet the feelings of the great body of the nation. The metaphysical

[1] Rhys Davids, "Buddhism," p. 154.

side is left in the shade. There is no allusion to Nirvâna: all turns on social morality.[1] We have first injunctions bearing upon the observances most cherished by the Buddhists, the respect due to all forms of life and the consequent prohibition to kill any animal. The king desired that his country should be largely hospitable. He was careful to multiply everywhere useful trees and medicinal herbs. He planted by the roadsides, gardens of mango-trees, and sunk wells and made pools of water for the convenience of travellers.[2]

Respect for all living creatures, and gentleness towards all men are strictly enjoined.[3] The king's surveyors are charged to be the protectors of the weak, to comfort the prisoner, and to succour him if he has a family. The king is the mover in everything. "It is my duty," he says, "to secure the public weal by my counsels. Now the source of the public weal lies in the administration of justice." "All my efforts have but one end in view, namely, to pay this debt which the divine owes to the creatures."[4] "In the past, kings went out for their own pleasure, for the chase and other diversions, but in the end of my reign I have come to the true understanding. My pleasure consists in visiting and giving alms to the Brahmans and to the aged, and religious instruction to my people."[5]

"My principle is this: government by religion, progress by religion, security by religion."

Religion, as understood by the king, does not consist in vain rites, for these are like a bag of dry and empty mangoes. "The practice of religion consists in care for slaves and servants, almsgiving and respect to parents."

[1] M. Sénart has given a translation of these principal edicts in the *Journal Asiatique* (1880—1885). They are placed under the name Piyadasi, which is one of the names of Açoka. The eminent critic justly observes that we may find the point of contact between the chronology of India and that of Greece, in the identification of the Sandracothes of the Greeks, the adversary of Seleucus, with Chandragupta, the grandfather of Açoka. We are thus brought to the middle of the third century B.C.

[2] *Journal Asiatique*, 1880, p. 287.

[3] Ibid., p. 236.

[4] Ibid., p. 267.

[5] Ibid., p. 317.

"The progress of religion among men is secured in two ways: first, by positive rules, and second by infusing right sentiments into their minds. In the first place there must be obedience to positive rules, as for example when I forbid the killing of certain animals, and give many other direct religious prescriptions. But it is only by a change in the feelings of the man himself, that there is marked progress in religion, in the general respect for life, and in carefulness not to sacrifice any creature whatsoever. It is to this end that I have graven this inscription on the rock, that it may go down to my sons and grandsons, and endure as long as the sun."[1]

What a lofty idea of kinghood we get from the following words: "For this end this religious inscription was graven, that our sons and grandsons may not think they ought to make fresh conquests. That they may not think that conquest by the arrow deserves the name; that they may look upon it as only disturbance and violence. That they may consider nothing a true conquest, but the conquests of religion. These avail for this world and the other. Let them seek all their diversions in the pleasures of religion; for these are good for both worlds." Here is an inscription which raises us far above a merely political religion. "Listen to the words of King Piyadasi, beloved of the Devas: Each man sees only his own good actions; he says to himself, 'I have done a good deed.' On the other hand, he does not see the ill he does. He does not say to himself, 'I have done this or that evil thing.' It is true that this scrutiny is painful; and yet it is necessary to examine oneself and to say: 'Such and such acts are sins, such as anger, cruelty, passion, pride. We must keep a jealous watch over ourselves, and say, 'I will not yield to envy; I will not speak evil; this shall be for my greatest good here below; and it shall be indeed my greatest good in the world to come."[2]

Is there not a touching philanthropy in this inscription also? "From this day I make the following rule: 'To the prisoners who have been judged and condemned to death, I grant a reprieve of three days (before the execu-

[1] *Journal Asiatique*, 1880, p. 370.
[2] Ibid., p. 417.

tion).' They shall be warned that they have neither more nor less than this to live. Warned then of the term of their existence, they will give alms in view of the future life, or will fast. I desire, indeed, that even while shut up in a dungeon, they should make sure of what is beyond. I desire to see them fulfilling the various duties of religion, gaining the dominion over the senses and distributing alms."

The Buddhist Constantine, openly proclaimed liberty of worship, as in the following decree: "King Piyadasi beloved of the Devas, wills that all the sects may dwell in all places. All set before them the same end—the subjugation of the senses and the purity of the soul. But the soul is diverse in its will, and in its affections. Let the sects then observe each its own rules in whole or in part."[1]

Here is a decree still higher in tone: "King Piyadasi beloved of the Devas, honours all the sects. He honours them by almsgiving and by every token of respect. But the king beloved of the Devas, attaches less importance to these alms and honours, than to the wish to see the virtues prevail which are the essential parts of all religions. It is true that in these essentials there will be great diversity. But the one virtue all may have in common is moderation of speech, that no sect should exalt itself and decry others; that nothing should be said against any without good cause, that on the contrary every opportunity should be taken to pay due honour to all. In thus acting, each sect promotes its own progress while seeking that of others."[2]

If Buddhism had done nothing more than inspire such maxims of government, it would have covered itself with eternal honour. This wise policy was nevertheless a dereliction from the doctrinal standpoint. If it had long prevailed, Buddhism must in the end have renounced alike its pessimism and its charity, that is, it must have denied its own spirit.

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[1] *Journal Asiatique*, 1880, p. 132.

[2] That which gives peculiar importance to the decrees of Açoka is their analogy with a Buddhist book which has a canonical value—the Pâli Dhammapada. M. Sénart conclusively proves this analogy. (*Journal Asiatique*, April, 1885, p. 410)

It is not for us to inquire into the circumstances (which are indeed sufficiently obscure,) leading to its proscription in India. Suffice it to say it still held its own in Ceylon in the south, and in Nepaul and Thibet in the north; and was subsequently adopted by the vast populations of China and Indo-China. During the long period from the time of Açoka to the conquests which carried it into the extreme East, it lost more and more of what had been the secret of its charm and its power—that element of humanity so striking in Buddha himself. The legend of his life underwent great alterations and became more and more mixed up with the solar myths. From them were taken the signs by which the Buddhas were recognised, and most of the principal episodes of his life were made to bear some such naturalistic explanation. It would be a great mistake however to allow his personality to be resolved into this fantastic mythological creation, as though there had been nothing real and human at the commencement of this great movement, which loses all its originality if it is severed from its founder.[1]

Whatever transformation passed over primitive Buddhism under the withering breath of subtle speculation and puerile legend, it nevertheless preserved in spite

[1] M. Sénart has devoted the whole of his learned book, "La légende de Bouddha," to showing how the events of the life of Çâkyamuni can be brought into the cycle of the solar mythology. His supernatural birth, his leaving his palace, his conflict, his triumph, the ten signs by which he is known, and which have all a solar meaning, the myriad-rayed wheel which he sets in motion, his disappearance in Nirvâna, which represents the setting of the star, all appear to the learned author to indicate the constant identification of Buddha, as of all the gods of India, with the immortal Agni, the sun-god. We do not deny that the legend of Buddha came in the end to be cast in the uniform mould of Indian thought. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Buddhism had its own new and special province. There was in it an original element, not found in the antecedent mythologies. This new element is just the individuality, the personal influence of its founder, Is not this clear from M. Sénart's own conclusions? He says:—"Buddhism introduced into the ideas and practices of its followers a new doctrine and a human master, in place of the old divine masters. But the popular imagination took its revenge. Religious tradition manifested after its wont, its indestructible vitality. On Çâkyamuni devolved the legendary mantle which fell from the shoulders of the dethroned god; and the timid Indians gladly laid hold again of the consolation and hope of divine visitations in human form."—Sénart, "La légende de Bouddha." p. 458.

of all, its own peculiar type. Undoubtedly, popular superstition has made of it in many respects, a gross mythology; and Buddha has been exalted into an idol, though he himself repudiated belief in any god whatsoever. To-day we see hundreds of millions of men bowing before an image of Buddha which bears no kind of likeness to his true ideal; a motionless, vacant-eyed giant, sunk in unconsciousness, the features expressing only a dull, blank indifference, without a smile or ray of inward light; and we feel how low the race must have sunk under the pressure of an immense despair, to prostrate itself before this dreary symbol of moral and intellectual nothingness. This then is the issue of that brilliant naturism which has no life in itself and can impart none, so long as man does not recognise the principle of the divine above him and in the depth of his consciousness. The gods of light and of fruitfulness are not true gods; the absolute is not in them. Thus when man falls back into pantheistic naturism, from the heights of moral good of which he has caught a momentary glimpse, he finds himself in a region of death and emptiness. The holy inspiration of love cannot long warm these realms of the eternal void. Buddha is in truth the anti-Messiah, the only one whom nature left to herself, can offer to man. The true Messiah is He who redeems and restores the natural no less than the spiritual life. All the attempts made to combine the two Messiahs in an impossible syncretism, are frustrated by the stubbornness of facts.[1]

India, which had at times anticipated and cried out for the great God of conscience and of broken hearts, the Deliverer of the future, fell under the spell of pantheistic metaphysics. Hence her only Messiah was the Messiah of the great void. She lighted up the vacuum at first with a warm ray of love and pity; but it soon flickered down and died, leaving her desolate at the feet of her dreary Buddha, who failed to convey to her even the gift of oblivion, or to perfect the illusion of absolute absorption. Thus, as we have seen, she is ever crying out for fresh

[1] For a striking illustration of this see "The Light of Asia," by Edwin Arnold.

incarnations of the Master. Why should she desire these if the first Buddha had been able to fulfil his mission? It follows that annihilation itself is an illusion. The problem, stated by this race, so bold in its metaphysical speculations, has rémained unsolved.

We must not suppose that this *reductio ad absurdum* of naturism in a land which seemed singularly adapted for its triumph, was confined to India and had no effect upon the general development of the ancient world on the eve of the coming of Christ. It must not be forgotten that at this period, there were no longer any impassable barriers between East and West. The wind which blew from Asia, carried to the very heart of Greco-Roman civilisation, the moans of despair uttered in the valley of the Ganges. Thus in the evening of the day of preparation, Buddhism did much to destroy the beliefs of the past, and to create in the souls of men a mournful void which silently pleaded for a new faith.

BOOK IV.

HELLENIC PAGANISM.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST PERIOD.

THE naturism of the Aryans assumes a new character as it touches the shores of Greece, and commences an evolution in the course of which it becomes altogether transformed.[1] When it was first introduced into Greece in a dim past which defies chronology, it was simply the religion common to all the primitive Ayrans, which we have found to be identical both in Iran and on the shores of the Indus. But in Greece naturism is soon outgrown, and all but superseded, so far at least as it can be so, apart from a complete monotheism. It is no longer simply modified by the vague anthropomorphism of oriental religions, which is a mere metaphor, for it does not transform the forces of nature into moral personalities, but only invests them with some human attributes, leaving them still under the dominion of a fatal necessity. These religions are only traversed now and again by a flash of moral consciousness, as suddenly vanishing into darkness.

In Greece we have true humanism, a thing of a much higher order. The Greek divinity is essentially human.

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[1] Our chief source of information is Greek literature itself. To this we shall have constantly to refer our readers. We quote only the principal authorities more or less recent bearing on the subject. For Greek history we have availed ourselves of Grote's, and Curtius' "History of Greece." For the literature and religion of Greece we refer to "History of the Literature of Ancient Greece," *H. O. Müller*, and "Kunstarchæologische Werke," by the same. *L. von Rank*, "Universal History." *Dunker*, "Geschichte des Alterthums." *F. Creuze*, "Symbolik and Mythologie der alten Vöelker, besonders der Griechen." *L. F. A. Maury*, "Histoire des religions de la Grèce antique." *L. Preller*, "Griechische Mythologie." *P. Decharme*, "Mythologie de la Grèce antique." *Jules Girard*, "Le sentiment religieuse en Grèce, d'Homère à Eschyle." *E. Havet*, "Le Christianisme et ses origines."

He is man at his highest and best, at first with all the admixture of good and evil common to men, but gradually becoming spiritualised and idealised, till at length he exhibits the triumph of the moral element, which in the depths of man's being unites the human to the divine.

We know, indeed, that these human gods retained too many traces of their naturalistic origin to inhabit permanently a purely spiritual region. They never brought the lower elements in human nature entirely into subjection to its higher aspirations. Hence they did not long remain on the serene heights, to which they were raised by the genius of Greece in the noblest era of its art, philosophy, and poetry. The ideal perceived for a moment, soon vanishes, leaving a blank of dull disappointment in the hearts of those who adoringly beheld the vision. They fall back instinctively upon the religious conceptions of the past, however inferior to the beliefs of a grander age, because they imagine that they can thus regain the faith which seems slipping from their grasp. These old conceptions of the Divine reappear in the mysterious rites which filled so important a place in Hellenism, and by which the Greeks vainly sought to quiet their troubled conscience. We shall see this race supposed to be so frivolous and gay, by those who judge of it only by its brilliant æstheticism, really manifesting more than any other, the longing for pardon and expiation, and lifting with feverish eagerness the veil which hides the invisible. We are too apt to think of Greece as though her whole nature was personified in the enchanting goddess who, according to one of her most poetic legends, rises from the crest of the waves on a morning in spring, in all the brilliancy of her young and ideal beauty, with the smile upon her lips which is the joy of creation. We forget that beneath the same shining sea lay the land of shades, into whose mysterious depths the Greek gazed hungrily, passionately questioning the sphynx who kept guard over all the tombs, and seeking with unwearied earnestness to get the pangs of conscience assuaged. All this he did in his own way, with the exquisite sense of fitness inherent in his genius. These sublime and often sorrowful thoughts did not prevent him from developing in all

their beauty, those incomparable gifts which made Greece the grandest exponent of high art, nor from displaying in action the most indomitable energy.

It was in the recognition of man as above nature and as the type *par excellence* of the higher life, that the moral superiority of the Greek religion consisted. But before this height was reached, it was necessary that the spontaneous in man should acquire an intensity and energy, which should render it capable of commanding the forces of nature. At first, nature seems to overwhelm no less by her splendours than by her terrors. The religious evolution which ends in humanism, begins by stimulating the faculties of man in all directions, so that conscious of his own strength and dignity, he may stand erect in the presence of the greatness of nature. It is only when he has thus lifted up himself as man, that a yet deeper and higher intuition will lead him to recognise in the Ego, Him who is greater than the Ego,[1] the unseen God who appeals to his conscience. Then he will no longer stand erect; his knees will bow in holy awe; he will seek satisfaction for his deepest religious convictions; and if he does not find it, he will give vent to what M. Renan so well calls "the prayer of the earth in travail,"[2] unless indeed he seeks refuge in scepticism, or in a life of pleasure. Such, briefly, is the development of the religious consciousness of Greece, which we must now follow more in detail in its successive phases.

We shall have to enquire first, what were the causes which produced this great transformation of the naturism brought from Asia into Greece by its first colonists, and which gradually raised it into humanism. When we come to the mythological development of Hellenism, we shall see how all the gods of the Greek pantheon grew up out of the old conceptions of Oriental naturism. There is not one of them which is not at first a mere force or particular aspect of nature; but little by little, this elementary conception is lost sight of, and the god becomes a real personality, invested with moral attributes which constitute his proper and distinctively human character.

[1] Charles Secretan. [2] "Les Apôtres," p. 342.

§ I.—Conditions favourable to the Development of Humanism in Greece.

The beginnings of the Greek race are lost in the mystery which envelopes all pre-historic times, a mystery all the deeper in this case, because from national pride, Greeks have never been willing to acknowledge any other cradle than the privileged land of Greece. It is certain that they were preceded in that country by independent tribes, leading the life of the savage, just as we find it elsewhere. At some distant period, to which we can attach no date, there was a first migration from the Himalayas into Greece, bringing with it the elements of primitive civilisation common to all the Aryan races. Of this we find undoubted traces in the words which the Greek, in common with other Indo-European languages, has retained to describe its religious, agricultural, and social life. The first immigration of the future Hellenes seems to have followed that which gave birth to the great nations, first of the Goths, then of the Celts. It comprised in its broad afflux, all the Græco-Italicans as we may call them. While a considerable section settled in the Italian peninsula, another flood of immigrants known as the Pelasgi occupied what is now called Greece. The Greeks have always acknowledged their kinship with the Pelasgi. Peleus, the father of Achilles, invokes in the Iliad, the Pelasgian Zeus, who represents in all points the great celestial god of the Aryans.[1]

The Pelasgi rapidly disappeared from history, becoming merged in the Hellenes or Greeks, who were their direct descendants. The name of Hellenes suggests the marshy country where dwelt the inhabitants of Southern Thessaly, and that of Greeks the mountainous regions occupied by others of the Pelasgi.[2]

It is not our intention to sketch the history of the formation of the Greek nationality. We simply note that the first Oriental immigration was followed by others from various parts of the mountains of Phrygia. "One division took the landway through the Hellespont's ancient portal of the nations; they passed through Thrace

[1] Ζεῦ πελασγικέ, Iliad, xvi. v. 233.

[2] Maury, i. 29.

into the Alpine land of northern Greece.[1]" At the foot of these mountains grew up the powerful tribe of the Dorians, which spread over central Greece, and finally made Sparta their capital. According to the national legend, they were led in this victorious expedition by the Heraclidæ, the descendants of the greatest and most divine of heroes. "Others descended from the Phrygian tablelands down the valleys to the coasts of Asia Minor." On these enchanted shores the Ionian race blossomed out like a splendid flower, promising rich fruit. From thence, these Asiatic Ionians spread under the name of the Leleges along the seaboard of the Mediterranean. They settled in large numbers in Attica, the favoured land where their nationality found its finest developments. When it had reached its culminating point, it sent back its surplus population to those shores of Asia Minor, whence it had sprung, and returned with interest in civilisation and wealth all that it had brought away.

The Hellenic nationality includes also two other less important tribes: the Achæans, settled at first in the Peloponnesus, and the Æolians, a mixture of various races.

The Greeks in the earlier stages of their development as a nation, were greatly influenced by the Phœnicians, whose ships sailed on all waters, leaving in their track numerous colonies which diffused their religion and civilisation; sometimes forming regular settlements, as at Thebes, more frequently spreading themselves among the islands and along the seaboard. They left on the mind of Greece, a fresh mythological deposit, so to speak, like that which Phrygia had herself received from Chaldea and Egypt. It is to these daring voyagers that Greece owes the worship of the great sea gods Aphrodite and Poseidon (who was at first only the Tyrian Melkart), and probably also the first legend of Hercules. With her peculiar power of transforming everything into her own image, and setting her impress even on that which was not her own creation, Greece rapidly eliminated from these sensuous and sanguinary religions, all that was not

[1] Curtius, vol. i. p. 37.

in accordance with her own genius. She soon shook off this alien influence also, which had fulfilled its purpose in stimulating her thought. Some of her most familiar heroic legends set forth this emancipation. This is obviously the meaning of the victory of Theseus over the gloomy Cretan Minotaur, who is no other than the Asiatic Moloch athirst for sacrifices of blood.[1]

Such were the influences from without which told powerfully upon the Hellenic race.

Let us endeavour to seize some of its characteristic traits, those brilliant qualities which were to make it for so long mistress of the ancient world. To us Greece seems to represent the very ideal of humanity, not of humanity renewed, transfigured in the perfection of moral beauty (this the world has only seen once, and then among a race very different from the Greeks and far less richly gifted); but of natural humanity, so to speak, as it may be normally developed under existing conditions, with all its powers in vigorous and harmonious exercise. Greece represented humanity with its weaknesses; but of these she was at least conscious, and this very consciousness urged her to ceaseless aspiration after a higher state, which was to her the recalling of a mysterious and beautiful past. Hence she represented natural humanity as it has never been represented before or since. She expressed better than any other race, its highest aspirations so often blended with tragic fears.

In the first place, Greece possessed in an exceptional degree, the gift of beauty. It may truly be said that the mould of the human form, as reproduced by her, has never been broken. Where else can we find proportions so perfect, combining in so harmonious a whole? Where else do we see such dignity of carriage, such a proud yet graceful setting of the head? "Never thus did slave lift up his head,"[2] said the Greek in the pride of his beauty. He felt himself free not only from the domination of capricious masters, but from the no less fatal plasticity to the demands of his own animal organism. Beauty of form in this degree of perfection, is the triumph of mind

[1] Ranke, Universal History, p. 120.

[2] Theognis, v. 537.

over brute matter even in its mightiest manifestations. It may be said of Greece herself as she appears personified in the immortal marbles which still preserve for us the divine smile of her beauty: *Incessu patuit Dea.* In her we behold the true *Venus Victrix*, the humanised divinity, who is to take the place of the monstrous and shameless Astarte. In order to realise a divine ideal, Greece has only to reproduce the enchanting image ever before her eyes.

This she did with surpassing skill. High art brought out the true value of that plastic beauty in which humanism was already expressing itself in form. The genius of the artist, when it is truly creative, as it was among the Greeks, is itself a triumph of man over nature. When art attains this degree of perfection, it no longer gives us a mere reproduction of natural beauty. The artist chooses, combines, brings out from the confused mass of details, the supreme beauty which is, so to speak, their essential idea, their *raison d'être*, according to the great thought of Aristotle, who makes form the end and aim of the natural life. Thus to interpret nature by idealising it, is to rise superior to it, to bring it into subjection to the thought which holds within itself the type of the beautiful. It is to assert the kingship of man over nature. We shall see presently how intuition of a higher order blended in the mind of the Greek with this æsthetic sense. True æstheticism consists in bringing out the harmony of things often hidden under the multiplicity of phenomena and lost in their detail.

This sense of the beautiful, so natural to man, stands in close relation to the intelligence, which after taking cognisance of the various objects of knowledge, grasps the link of connection between them, so as to be able to turn them to account in the struggle for life. Among the Greeks this intelligence was very keen. They possessed at once the swift perception of genius, and that faculty of concentration in which its strength lies.

The moral conception of Greece was free from any touch of sacerdotalism, and embraced the whole life. But here, as in the ancient East, conscience asserted itself in later times, and made feeble, ineffectual attempts after an

unattainable ideal. This was not, however, till the days of the full maturity of the nation.

We may add that the Greek is not a dreamer lost in reverie, or absorbed in the contemplation of nature, which is a virtual abdication by man of his power over her. He was a creature of rapid decision and unhesitating action. His heart swelled with a manly courage which bade him dare danger. He acted as he thought, swiftly and decidedly.

This native humanism so remarkable among the Greeks, was the great factor in their religion, which they fashioned in their own likeness. So abundant were the gifts of nature to them, that no race so represented the bright and smiling youth of humanity with its wealth of blossom. Their season was indeed but short in that favoured nook of earth, but such a vision of beauty, however brief, remains a joy for ever. The most fugitive moments of our life are sometimes those fullest of immortality.

The genius of Greece found a perfect organ of expression in her language.[1]

There are other tongues more sonorous, more brilliant, but there are none which form so lucid a medium of philosophic thought, none which express with such subtleness and flexibility not only the exact aspect of things, but "the most delicate distinctions of the conditioned and the unconditioned, the possible and the actual."[2]

Its great strength lies in the verb. "The entire conservative force of the Greek language has applied itself to verbal forms; so that these express with the utmost facility the greatest multiplicity of the notions of time, its point and duration, and the completion of an action in itself."[3] "The whole language resembles the body of an artistically trained athlete, in which every muscle, every sinew, is developed into full play, where there is no trace of timidity, or of inert matter, and all is power and life."[4]

This gifted race was placed in an environment admir-

[1] "Le plus beau qui soit né sur des lèvres humaines." André Chénier.
[2] Curtius, pp. 21, 22.
[3] Ibid., p. 22.
[4] Ibid., p. 24.

ably fitted to develop its genius, and where it was free from that overpowering domination or fascination of nature, to which man had elsewhere succumbed. The country of the Hellenes did not present, like Egypt or Central Asia, vast plains on which the individual seemed no more than a grain of sand, an insignificant unit lost in the masses, who were driven in herds by tyrannical masters, to till the ground for them, or to fight their battles.

Separated by a chain of mountains on the north from the great neighbouring continent, as Italy is from Central Europe by the Alps, the country is essentially insular in character, its gracefully indented shores abounding with gulfs and natural harbours. Bounded on the north by the Eastern Alps, Greece dips on the south at three points into the Mediterranean, almost in the latitude of Gibraltar and opposite the most fertile provinces of Africa and Asia, to which it approaches also through its islands. The Peloponnesus forms a peninsula. Central Greece descends in many gentle slopes into Attica. It is admirably adapted for division into small states, each distinct from the other and having its own natural boundaries. The climate being the same for all, they all form part of the same country while each retaining its own character. The nature of the soil requires constant but not arduous tillage.

The sea invites the dwellers on its shores to daring enterprise. It is the great high road of the world, binding man to man with its water-ways, as says Homer. Such a land was well adapted to develop bold and manly activity. As the great geographer, Ritter has said, Greece in its structure resembles the human hand, that marvellous instrument of intelligent action.

The country of the Hellenes was not only perfectly adapted to foster a progressive civilisation; it also gratified the æsthetic sense. The beauty of the country does not consist in the massive grandeur of its mountains, or the immensity of its forests, as in India, but in the harmony of its undulating outlines and the softened brilliancy of its atmosphere. It is a tender beauty which man can feel without being overwhelmed by it; immaterial, subtle as thought. While in the East quantity overrides quality, and the gigantic proportions of nature overwhelm the

beholder with awe rather than admiration, the very opposite result is produced in Greece. There the eye rests delightedly upon rounded forms, and gentle undulations, outlined against a softly irridiscent sky, which bears no resemblance to the consuming glare of the sun in Asia or Africa.

The political and social constitution adopted in the chief cities of Greece, also helped to ensure the triumph of humanism. We shall only refer to the earlier developments of the constitution, in so far as they laid the foundations of the Greek city *par excellence*—Athens. In Sparta, after the triumph of the Heraclidæ we find a sort of military brotherhood, at the head of which were two kings whose power was very limited, since they were dependent on two archons, removable magistrates representing the democratic element. Among the Dorians, the state took all offices upon itself. It was landlord, schoolmaster, the regulator of the life of every man down to the minutest detail. Yet the citizen was not crushed as beneath the yoke of Oriental monarchies. He proudly preserved his dignity. He enjoyed sufficient leisure to attend to public affairs, thanks to the Helots, the class of inhabitants subjected by force of arms, who did all the menial work of life. He had a share in the choice of the authorities whose power pressed so heavily upon him. Military courage raised to the highest point, fostered feelings of heroism within him.

It was in Attica that the constitution of the Greek city attained the highest perfection of which it was capable. We pass by the heroic age, to which we shall have to refer presently when we come to speak of the religious evolution, over which it exerted a very direct influence. From legends of this distant past, history has gathered the memory of a period when the work of unification in Attica was carried on under the leadership of bold and powerful chiefs, kings by veritable Divine right, for they ruled by virtue of possessing the noblest qualities of their race. These they displayed with indomitable courage in the sanguinary wars undertaken by Athens.

The constitution which bears the name of Solon, and which was at first a great edict of pacification, following

on a period of tumult when more than once the monarch had become a tyrant, presents an admirable blending of aristocracy and democracy. All the citizens had a share in the state; but Solon made income the standard of political rights, income being not the amount of coined money possessed, but the revenue produced by a man's own lands.[1] To the civic assemblies belonged the right of voting organic laws and deciding questions of war and peace. "From the same assemblies originated, by means of free election, the jury-courts, to which the decision belonged in all criminal cases relating to the public welfare, and to which at the same time an appeal lay for every citizen from the sentence of the judicial officers."[2] "The Areopagus was an official body consisting of life-members, which, independent of the fluctuation of daily opinion, was called upon to oppose premature innovations with the authority of high office, to watch over the sacred usages and traditions of the past, and to exercise a general superintendence over the commonwealth. It was composed of men who had blamelessly served their country in the highest offices, and thus united all the eminent intelligence and experience existing in Athens."[3] The Council of the Four Hundred was elected in equal numbers by the tribes. The executive power was placed in the hands of Archons, who attended to current affairs. The state organised a system of public instruction, watched over the interests of morality and religion, and passed sumptuary laws.[4]

This constitution remained unaltered in any essential feature through the most various political changes. It was restored after the brilliant but ephemeral tyranny of the Thirty, and always gave a democratic character to the political constitution of Athens. "Among the free Athenians no man was excluded from the common political life." "The offices of the state were elective, so that only such men conducted the executive as had been entrusted with the power by the confidence of the people.[5]" Slavery, which was retained in a mild form, set the citizen at

[1] See Curtius, vol. i. p. 331.
[2] Ibid., p. 335.
[3] Ibid., p. 336.
[4] Ibid., *et seq.*
[5] Ibid., p. 335.

liberty to attend to public duties. Thus everything combined to stimulate capacity to its highest exercise in every department. In the stirring life of the Agora the most able were sure to come to the front under the pressure of events and in the excitement of constant public discussion.

It would be scarcely possible to exaggerate the power exerted by speech over this intelligent and sensitive people, so appreciative of the beautiful, and so responsive to dialectic skill. Greece became the land of the Word, that is of true life-compelling speech. For in Athens, augument paved the way for practical decision. We do not wonder then that Thucydides makes speech the mainspring of the history of Athens; for surely this noble faculty—the utterance of mature thought—is the distinctive glory of civilised man.

The smaller communities did not lose sight of the larger State, though they were never entirely absorbed in it. In addition to his own particular city, to which the Greek always devoted himself with jealous ardour, he recognised a real community—that which Herodotus called the Hellenic element *ἑλληνικόν*, founded upon oneness of race, manners and religion, if not of interests. This greater community was represented in very early times by the Amphictyonics, or religious festivals—associations formed among the various Greek States which recognised the same gods. These States sent their delegates to Delphi or Olympus, to take part in the religious solemnities and great games, which gave such an impetus to the development of the valour, vigour and physical beauty of the nation. These physical exercises were succeeded by the nobler contests in poetic skill.[1]

No civil constitution determined the functions of this Amphictyonic Council, the influence of which was primarily a moral one. Delphi became, about the seventh century before Christ, the centre and heart of Greece. We shall only see the full significance of this fact, when we come presently to connect it with the religious evolution, by which the Delphic oracle was accepted as emphatically the

[1] Maury, vol. ii. p. 12, *et seq.*

voice of the god of Greece. If we look at it a moment from a political point of view, we shall see that the Greek race found in this aspect, its true centre at Delphi. From thence proceeded its highest patriotic inspiration. Foreign nations resorted thither to ratify relations with Greece, and her colonies derived their constitution from Delphi. It was indeed easier to assure the authority of this ideal representation of Greek unity abroad than at home, for there it escaped the rivalry of neighbours, always the deadliest of all.

There was one supremely glorious period when the unity of the Hellenes manifested itself with unparalleled brilliancy and heroism. This was in the decisive conflict between Greece and Persia. Then was written with the sword, the grand epic of historic times of which Herodotus was the inspired Homer. This was one of those sudden episodes in which an entire nation rises up under one common impulse, as if it had but one heart, one thought. We will not say that then it rises above itself, for never is man more true to his nature than in these supreme moments. All petty interests, all low thoughts, all earth-born vapours are dispersed by a purer breath from the heights; and we recognise in such crises, the inspiration which can express itself in heroic action no less than in sublime poetry.

It is in these heroic days that Hellenism rises to its truest grandeur. Greece, menaced with mortal peril, finds in her patriotism a sort of sacred transport which exalts all her faculties. It inspires her at once with the military genius which knows how to combine and dispose all the forces at her command, and with the heroic intrepidity which ignores danger and difficulty. Marathon and Salamis were pre-eminently the victories of mind and soul over brute force, for the vast masses of the Persians swept over the land rather like a wild tempest let loose, than like an organised army. It was distinctly the human genius of the Hellenes which won these decisive battles, and when the combatants of Salamis thought, as Herodotus tells us, that they saw a female figure of marvellous beauty hovering over their vessels, they were not mistaken. It was indeed Greece, in her noblest idealisation, who

led them on to victory and freedom. This apparition was the glorious impersonation of that heroic humanism, which triumphed in the domain of action and on the great battle-field of history, only because it had already triumphed in the religious sphere. It will be for us now to trace its development in this higher order.

§ II.—First Development of the Greek Conscience in the Direction of Humanism.

We are accustomed to look at the religion of Greece only in the calm light of its noontide glory. It is true nevertheless that, like Hercules, one of her most faithful types, she had to wrestle in her cradle with serpents trying to strangle her in their deadly coils, and faithfully representing the delusive snares of naturism. It was by a long and slow process that Greece freed herself from their deadly embrace. Nor was the deliverance ever quite complete. We shall see that the Greek conscience was perpetually tormented by a persistent paradox, in spite of the prominence given to the human side of the divinity. We shall not separate the religious evolution from the artistic, because nowhere else did art exercise so great an influence upon religion, as was natural with a race so æsthetic as the Hellenes. Here we must be on our guard against a false impression which is very common, that the effect of poetry and art upon the religious development of the Greeks, made them of necessity a frivolous people. This is degrading art to a mere trick of the imagination. The beautiful, the true, the good, have all the same deep roots. They have no doubt distinct developments, which may go on apart, but only to the great detriment of all. Greece certainly did not escape this danger; but in her deeper consciousness, she never separated the beautiful from the good, ever seeking harmony in life, in man and in things. The most idealistic of her philosophers spoke truly in her name, when he said that the beautiful is the glory of the true, and identical with it. To beautify the gods was to purify and elevate them above the simple life of nature.

To enshrine them in the most perfect human form, was

to invest them also with the intellect, the heart, the conscience of man. The massive brow of Olympian Jove must be the temple of majestic thought. The noble form was but the expression of moral dignity. This transformation of the gods from cosmic forces into idealised human beings, went on even more rapidly in poetry than in the plastic arts. We shall not be surprised therefore to find the artistic development largely coinciding with the religious. We shall see presently how art contributed to develop the sense of imperfection in the world as it is, and to foster that aspiration after a god greater than any yet known, which is the final term of Hellenism as of all the religions of the old world. Art is, in fact, not simply a magician charming us by his incantations and making us forget the dull realities of the present, in the fugitive types of the eternal beauty which he calls up before us. Art also enhances the contrast between the reality which shuts us in and the ideal which presents itself to our aspiring soul, and sets this contrast before us with an energy of pathos. As Plato has said: by evoking the eternal idea of the beautiful, art carries us back to the distant times when we celebrated these glorious mysteries in unsullied light.[1] Art casts no veil of oblivion. It remembers and hopes, and by its powerful influence quickens the best aspirations of the soul of man.

This humanisation at once moral and artistic, of the substance of the old religions, was not however free from peril. If the Greek mythology magnified the gods in one direction, it minimised them in another. If, on the one hand, it raised them as far above the Eastern Pantheon as man is above mere nature; on the other hand, it made them sharers in all the passions and in almost all the follies of humanity. In order to understand this paradox, we must glance for a moment at the origin of that creation of the human mind—so strange and yet so spontaneous and universal—the myth. It stands in close connection with the ideas which man forms of things in the obscure period of the origin of religion. It is an utter mistake to regard the myth as Euhemerus and his disciples do, as simply

[1] Phædrus, § 249. "Dialogues of Plato." Jowett's Trans., vol. i. p. 584.

a legendary distortion of real facts; or with Max Müller as the result of mere misconception of words, metaphors for instance being taken literally; or again with Creuzer and Guignault, as the popular form in which profound sacerdotal mysteries are taught.[1] The myth is nothing else than the *naïf* expression of the way in which primitive man represents things to himself under the influence of naturism. We have already observed that he sees the Divine in all the manifestations of the natural life, as a spirit informing a body, like the spirit of which he is conscious in his own being. The natural processes are to him the development of the divine life. Regarding his own constitution as the normal type of all existence, he infers on general principles of anthropomorphism, that there is in heaven and earth, in sun and moon, a male and female element. The relations of cause and effect he regards as sexual relations. The great gods who personify the cosmic forces, destroy life after having bestowed it. Like man, they have their loves and hates. So long as naturism goes no further than a vague anthropomorphism, this history of the gods only reproduces in a distant and vague manner, the history of men. The drama of the gods is enacted in a region which, from its remoteness and mystery, commands a measure of respect and adoration.

But this is no longer the case when anthropomorphism has become a real, living humanism. No doubt when the evolution is complete, the conception of the Divine gains by it; for after all, the soul of man is something far higher than any mere natural forces; but until this divine element is fully brought out, and the lower nature is shown to be under its feet, humanism in its earlier stages seems miserably to degrade the gods, so vivid and realistic does it make that which was at first only a symbol. Thus we have graphic representations of adulterous and murderous transports, where in Oriental pantheism we had simply the succession and interaction of natural cause and effect.

[1] There is an admirable *résumé* of the various explanation of the production of the myth in M. Hildebrand's Introduction to his translation of the "History of Literature," by Otfried Müller.

Even at this stage the higher elements of humanity assert themselves and lift up their protest against the miserable degradation of the idea of God. Hence the strange admixture of the base and the beautiful in the idea of the Divine, which characterises the whole period till humanism, growing dissatisfied with gods fashioned after the likeness of man, lifts them for a time to the lofty summit where the human is lost in the Divine, or at least becomes one with it in a strong and holy alliance.

The Homeric epic brings before us in strong relief all the contradictions of humanism in its first period, in which it at once debases and exalts the divine idea. We shall see how largely in the succeeding period, the Greek freed himself from this inconsistency. And yet the old naturism was never altogether shaken off, and it perpetuated the element of fatalism out of which it sprang, and which excluded the idea of a supreme Deity, truly and absolutely lord of the universe. For one of two views must be accepted; either the god had not the power to cast out the element of evil from nature; in which case he was not supreme; or having the power, he had not the will, in which case he was not supremely good. Hence the grave conflict in the religious conceptions of the old world, even when these had reached their highest point, a conflict carried on not only in the sphere of the intellect but of the conscience, and becoming the source at once of its deepest anguish and highest aspiration.

In contemplating the boundless wealth of Greek mythology, we must not lose sight of the many secondary causes which helped to produce its galaxy of beauty. The changing aspects of nature in this land which includes so many zones within a limited sphere; the frequent relations of the Greeks with other nations by the highway of the sea; the various incidents of the national life, the chief of which were emigration and colonisation; all these became so many sources of various myths, as they presented themselves to the fertile imagination of the Greek.

When Greece came to possess religious centres like Delphi and Olympus, the countless creations of her imagination naturally ranged themselves in a certain

hierarchical order.[1] Nevertheless her fruitful genius was still free to beautify them and to add to their number, for she had no priestly caste to be the jealous guardian of tradition. The singers who celebrated the gods did not belong to the priesthood, which was however open to all and was almost a lay institution. It was no part of the priests' duty to initiate the people into the use of sacred formulas supposed to possess magic virtue, like the Egyptian Books of the Dead, or the sacred hymns of the Vedas. They had no oracular message to deliver. When they magnified the national gods in song, they yielded to a free inspiration. When at the close of the feast, they celebrated the *amours* and combats of Olympus, no one asked if they had added some grace of their own invention to the rich store of ancient myths.[2] Under the endless variety of the Greek myths, it is not difficult to discern a common origin. The first nucleus of the myth is always the naturism of the primitive Aryans, somewhat enriched by the addition of legends brought from Phœnicia. But as soon as it reaches the shores of Greece, we note the tendency to humanise the Divine, to impress on it a personal living character, to kindle it with the glow of human passions, and to impart to it the noble attribute of conscience. A hasty glance at the greatg ods of the Homeric epos will make this abundantly evident.

There is not one of them, either in his attributes or the legend attached to him, who does not retain some characteristic traits of his naturalistic origin. The very name (*Zeus-Dyans*, the Latin Jupiter) suggests the idea of the luminous heaven. He dwells in the ether, and like Zeus Lycaios, he is positively the god of light.[3] It was constantly said that he sent the rain, and as he thus made the earth fruitful, he became the hero of countless *amours* with mortal women, daughters of earth. The local legends relating the *amours* of Zeus, are often only the description, under various poetic forms, of natural phenomena. The famous sacred oak of Dodona, from out the leafy branches

[1] Ludwig Preller, "Griechische Mythologie," vol. i. Introd.
[2] Dunker, "Geschichte des Alterthums," vol. iii.
[3] Zeus Lycaios first worshipped on mount Lycæon, a name supposed to be derived from λύκη (*lux*, light). Decharme, p. 72.

of which came the voice of the god, represented the dark clouds. *Here* (Juno), from the Sanscrit Svar, is the great goddess of heaven. Volatile as the air, she passes from transports of love to tumults of hate. *Athene* (Minerva), who becomes in the end the purest impersonation of thought, is at first nothing but the Vedic *Ushas*,[1] Ahanâ, the burning one, as the Vedic poets called the dawn. She may also be identified with the equally brilliant lightning, which comes forth from the skies like the daughter of Zeus from the brain of her father.[2] There can be no doubt as to her naturalistic origin. Apollo, as is indicated by his name of Phœbus, φῶς, light, is evidently the most brilliant manifestation of the great god of heaven. He is the son of Zeus and of Leto, who represents the night. He is said to have been born under a palm-tree, the Greek name of which signifies the dawn.[3] When, in the very moment of his birth, the young god speeds the arrows from his bow, he is a striking symbol of the rising sun, as it darts its first rays. His sister Artemis, with her golden spindle and her golden reins, is a lunar goddess. She is the most beautiful and chaste of virgins, represented by the evening star, whose gentle light speaks only of purity. Hermes is the son of Zeus and Maia. This goddess personifies dark night, as is indicated by the cave in whose gloomy depths she brought forth her son. Hermes represents twilight; hence in a myth which is purely Vedic, he appears stealing the cows of Apollo which symbolise the sun.

After the gods of the heavens come those of the earth, and of fire and water. In Hephæstus (Vulcan) we trace the *Agni* of the Vedas.[4] His name is sometimes used simply as a synonym for fire itself. In the theogony of Hesiod, he is born of Here alone, in an access of rage, and thus becomes the image of a stormy sky. His staggering gait represents the irregular movement of the lightning.[5] Hestia (Vesta)[6] carries our thoughts at once to the fire on the hearth, which all the Aryans regarded as divine, making no distinction between it and the sacrificial fire. Hestia presided at Delphi, the

[1] Decharme, p. 72.
[2] Ibid., p. 129.
[3] Φοῖνιξ means of a red colour.
[4] Decharme, p. 145.
[5] Ibid., pp. 162, 163.
[6] Ibid., p. 170.

most sacred altar in Greece. There she apparently represented the centre of the earth. By degrees she became confounded with the earth, and consequently with Demeter and Cybele. Ares or Mars is obviously the Greek Indra, the god of the storm, the leader of the Maruts, the breakers, with whom his very name suggests a probable analogy.[1] He was evidently intended to become the great warrior-god upon earth. His intervention in fight is always accompanied with terrific noise. His cry, when wounded, is a fearful bellowing, and as soon as he returns to the heavens, he conceals himself in a thick cloud. If he sleeps in the arms of Aphrodite, it is because storms sometimes sleep in the fair days of the spring. Aphrodite herself, who has evidently come from Phœnicia by way of Cyprus, is at first the voluptuous image of the creative power of life, herself born of the foam of the ocean, as of the great vital fluid left there by old Saturn after his mutilation. She can be nothing else than an emblem of the fruitfulness of nature.

The most cursory glance at the Greek mythology will show us that Poseidon represents the humid element, Pluto the dark regions underground, Demeter the earth, our common mother, Proserpine the grain of wheat, the seed which dies to live again. It would be easy to find representations of every aspect of nature, grave and gay, in the crowd of secondary deities who people the lower heights of Olympus.[2]

The transformation of these gods who are so closely identified with natural phenomena, goes on, so to speak, before our eyes in the so-called Homeric hymns, till it reaches its brilliant consummation in the two great epics of the siege of Troy. We can still indeed discern the cosmic force through the human garb of the gods. Their weaknesses, their enticements, their adventures, even their principal attributes, correspond to the natural phenomena

[1] Ares, according to Max Müller, comes from the Sanscrit *Mar*, from whence *Marut*. Decharme, p. 176.

[2] On this naturalistic aspect of the Olympians, see the chapters on the subject in Preller's "Griechische Mythologie," and the part referring to them in M. Decharme's book on the same subject.

which they at first represented, but at the same time, the line of demarcation is drawn more and more clearly. In the first place, the Homeric god has his own proper physiognomy and character; he acts like a living, moral agent. Nor does he only act; he speaks and deliberates; pursues a train of thought; states his impressions, makes known his will. There is nothing like this in the old Aryan mythology, except in the later incarnations of Rama, Çiva and Vishnu, illusory disguises of a god who is always one and the same, and who only assumes a human personality as a momentary mask. Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Mars, are ardent champions, either of the Trojans or the Greeks. They take part in the conflict going on, and discuss their preferences or dislikes on the heights of Olympus, like the Greeks and Trojans themselves in their councils of war. These heights of Olympus are indeed very near the earth. The immortals seem to have the advantage in their greater strength and exemption from death, but in very truth they are the inferiors of man. It is clear that the human hero is the type upon which the conception of the god is modelled. The earthly king is not more passionate in his hate than these heavenly monarchs. He speaks with as much eloquence and with a more marked effort to persuade, because the balance of forces is less evenly held among men than among the Olympians. His courage inspires greater interest, for his risks are greater. How noble does he appear in the heat of battle, exposing his breast to the mortal darts, and overthrowing all that stands in his way; presenting to the foe as grand a front as the mountain which rises above the valleys. In truth it is his own greatness which the Greek has projected upon his gods. If they are pitiful, if they bend their ear to the suppliant, they have learnt the lesson from Achilles, returning to old Priam the body of Hector watered with his tears. The virtue of the Homeric hero is indeed darkened by many shadows. It is the human soul in its simple, natural development, without any attempt at its radical amendment. His valour never fails; he is good to the unfortunate; hospitality is a sacred duty in his eyes; but he exterminates his enemies without scruple.

His heart responds to all the tender claims of family affection. When in foreign lands, he pictures to himself with touching pathos, the smoke going up from the family roof-tree. As a son he is dutiful; as a brother, full of tenderness. He honours his wife, but does not deem it a wrong done to her to receive into intimacy many a fair female captive. Hence he does not withdraw his homage from gods as inconstant as himself, because he judges them by his own standard. To use an expression very familiar in the Iliad, *to act as a man* is to show *oneself the son of a god.* When Ulysses draws himself up to his majestic height, and raises a head "from which the hair descends in wavy curls like hyacinthine flowers," he is said to resemble the immortal gods.[1] Thus the naturalistic element is lost in the human. Nature retires into the background.

One of the first evidences of this victory of mind over the unconscious forces of matter, is that harmonious proportion between all the parts of the Homeric epos which makes it a symmetrical work, expressing one main thought and marked out on a definite plan. In this it contrasts strikingly with the disconnected, bewildering mass of Indian poetry, which seems to lose its way amid the multiplicity of objects, and to be baffled by the wild luxuriance of nature. In the Homeric poem everything bears the impress of thought, the seal of man's reason, without excluding the exquisite flowers of imagination. Upon the canvas all palpitating with living souls, falls a calm light which brings into relief the harmonious lines of the setting.

The Greek poet by no means slights natural objects. He paints his landscape as faithfully as his human figures. Only he is careful not to let his hero be lost in the vastness of his environment. He borrows from nature the colours in which to represent the creation of his thought. The imagery used in the Homeric epics is like a clear mirror intended to reflect the thoughts, the feelings and doings of the man. All is made subservient to this end, from the fierce lion scattering terror with his roar, to the

[1] It is said of Ulysses *ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος*, Odyssey xxiii. v. 163.

soft silvery foliage of the olive, bending in the evening breeze, till the cruel storm tears it up by the roots and lays it low. The forest stripped of its leaves in autumn by the icy north wind, and waiting for the spring to clothe it afresh, represents the successive generations of men. This humanisation of figures borrowed from nature, is not one of the least characteristic traits of this poetry, which is always fresh and vivid without exaggeration.

It must be recognised, however, that above the simply human god, the ideal hero, the religious soul of the Greek, even at this period, had visions of a yet higher ideal, though he did not try to bring it into harmony with his current conceptions. Homer acknowledges a Zeus greater than the vindictive and capricious husband of Juno, a supreme God, Lord of heaven and earth, the god whose power there is no resisting.[1] "All Olympus trembles at his nod."[2] Speaking to the gods and goddesses assembled in council on the highest peaks of many-ridged Olympus, he says:

> "Ye shall know
> In strength how greatly I surpass you all.
> Make trial if ye will, that all may know."[3]

He is addressed as "Father Zeus, the ruler over gods and men,"[4] the absolute dispenser of good and ill.[5] To him repair the poor and the distressed. His heart is open to pity.

> "Prayers are the daughters of immortal Jove,[6]

and though

> "Halt and wrinkled and of feeble sight,
> They greatly aid and hear man when he prays."[7]

It is in the second of the Homeric poems—the pure and pathetic Odyssey—that the notion of the deity becomes truly exalted, and with it the sense of man's duty. Ulysses is the type of a heroism very different from that

[1] Iliad, viii. 30; xix. 284.
[2] Ibid., i. 624.
[3] Ibid., viii. 19–21.
[4] Odyssey, xx. § 15.
[5] Iliad, viii. 34–38.
[6] Ibid., ix. 587.
[7] Ibid., ix. 538, 594.

of Achilles. Valour is, in him, combined with power of thought, eloquent utterance with self-restraint, in a word, with all the noblest faculties of man. He is the thinking reed whom Neptune himself, with all his hurricanes, cannot break. He lifts his head again after every storm, and his supreme conflict waged with triumphant iniquity at Ithaca, for the recovery of his wife, is a victory of good over evil. His tutelary goddess is herself human in a higher sense than the Olympians of the Iliad. She rises with the hero himself. In the Minerva of the Odyssey we have already a foreshadowing of the divine Virgin of Athens, who personifies not only the valour which guards the fatherland, but thought, genius, virtue, all that exalts and vitalises it.

Yet the fact remains that the human gods of the Homeric epos are beset with insoluble moral contradictions. Thus they are under the sway of a power stronger than themselves, of that mysterious destiny which is a survival of the old naturism, as though to show that it is never wholly subdued without the acceptance of the theistic conception of the universe. All the gods, including Jupiter himself, bow before the inexorable law of fate. "The gods themselves," says Homer, "cannot exempt their beloved hero from the death common to all, when once *Moira* (destiny) has laid hold of him to plunge him into the deep sleep of the tomb."[1]

In this contradiction lies the great interest of the cosmogony of the Hesiod. It is a mistake to look upon this as a poetic attempt to explain the origin of things. The myths of the cosmogony are unquestionably connected with traditions and legends which embody, in mythic forms, the actual recollections of the great geologic crisis.[2] The dominant feature in this broad and sombre picture of the formation of the world, is that this formation is the result of terrible struggles among the great forces of nature, these being personified in gigantic beings at once blind and cruel, and now as eager to destroy as they once were to create. The two earliest of these cosmic gods are still abstractions, for under the names

[1] Jules Girard, p. 54. *Moira* is the destiny of Jupiter.
[2] Decharme, c. iv.

of Chaos and Gaia, they symbolise unlimited space and terrestrial matter in process of formation. Eros who sets it in motion is simply the force of attraction. The drama of the natural life does not begin till later, when Uranus appears after the simply cosmic deities such as Erebus and night, Æther and day, whose only function has been to part the light from the darkness. Uranus produces a race of gods by his union with Gaia or the earth. He is the first murderer among these great mysterious gods who preceded the definite organisation of the world. He tries to take from his son *Chronos* (Saturn) the life he has given him. The Cyclops, who are also his offspring, are the gods of storms, and represent the power of evil let loose in the world. Chronos, warned by his mother of the murderous designs of Uranus, surprises him in his sleep, mutilates him, and throws into the sea the spoils of his manhood, which floating there in the state of foam, give birth to the beautiful Aphrodite.

So ends the first act of the drama. The divine fruitfulness does not cease. It goes on producing at once evil and good, for dark night, the first-born daughter of Chaos and Erebus, gives birth to hideous old age, to burning discord, the mother of all dolor and travail, to the Fates, Nemesis, lust and death.

The Oath which is to counteract the effects of evil, acts as a beneficent power over this fatal posterity of Erebus and night. With the Oath comes in the idea of the moral law.

Chronos, jealous of Zeus, the most powerful and valiant of his sons, to whom he feels he will have to give place, seeks again to kill him, but the young god is saved by his mother, and at the time appointed, enters on the decisive conflict with the blind forces of nature, personified in the Cyclops and Titans.

This conflict is many times renewed, and is not decided till Zeus, after having shut up his former enemies in the bowels of the earth, destroys the giant Typhon, their last survivor. Hesiod gives a magnificent description of the fatal conflict.

> "The earth wide blazes with the fires of Jove,
> Nor the flash spares the verdure of the grove,

Fierce glows the air, the boiling ocean roars,
And the seas wash with burning waves their shores;
The dazzling vapours round the Titans glare,
A light too powerful for their eyes to bear.
One conflagration seems to seize them all,
And threatens Chaos with the general fall.
From what their eyes behold, and what they hear,
The universal wreck of worlds is near.
Should the large vault of stars, the heavens, descend,
And with the earth in loud confusion blend,
Like this would seem the great tumultuous jar:
The gods engag'd, such the big voice of war!
And now the battling winds their havoc make,
Thick whirls the dust, earth thy foundations shake,
The arms of Jove thick and terrific fly
And blaze and bellow through the trembling sky,
Winds, thunder, lightning thro' both armies drove
Their course impetuous, from the hand of Jove.
Loud and stupendous is the raging fight;
And now each warrior god exerts his might.[1]

This sombre and impressive picture evidently represents the first volcanic convulsions of the earth, and shows us how terrible was the impression left by them on the minds of the survivors. It is truly Greek and altogether in harmony with humanism, that the victory is ascribed to a divine hero, a sort of celestial Achilles, who displays all his valour. This is not like Indra's symbolic conflict, which is renewed day by day, and is only a poetic image representing the persistent contrasts existing in nature. Jupiter's combats are assigned to a definite date in the past, and have a definite result. They are history carried into the very heart of nature. In order to mark how distinctly the victory of Zeus inaugurates a new era in which order and law will certainly prevail, the Theogony in a singular and daring myth makes him devour Metis or wisdom, the mother of Minerva.

"He made the goddess in himself reside,
To be in every act the eternal guide."[2]

Themis, the impersonation of the governing power of law, becomes his second wife. The daughters born of this alliance, which represents universal law, are the Hours.

[1] Hesiod, Theogony, 1000—102, Cook's Transl. [2] Ibid. 1237, 8.

"The Hours to Jove did lovely Thensis bear,
Eunomie, Dice and Irene fair.
O'er human labours they the power possess,
With seasons kind, the fruits of earth to bless."[1]

The three Fates are fruits of the same union. These determine the destinies of man.

The nine Muses represent beauty and harmony. Lastly, Minerva, sprung full armed from the brain of Jupiter, impersonates at once valour and poetry, while Nemesis personifies the moral government of the world.

This victory of the human god is not complete, however, because the powers of evil are still at work. Their very existence remains a sad and inexplicable problem, for after all, as we have seen, they were produced directly by the gods themselves. Evil, pain and death have been from the beginning, and are traceable to the first Cause of all things, which is itself subject to the fatal law of necessity. The primordial god might say with Osiris: "Evil and Not-being are in me." Hence Zeus himself is never sure of his triumph, and is always in fear of rivals rising up to dispute his power. This is the explanation of the strange myth of Prometheus, at least in its earlier form, as it appears in the Theogony. It puts the destiny of man in an altogether mournful light. Prometheus, according to Hesiod, is a beneficent rather than a perverse Titan. He not only tries to steal the celestial fire that he may give it to man, and with it impart to him the secret of all progress in the natural life; but he is anxious also to communicate to him the more subtle and divine flame of intellect. Yet he deserves the wrath of Zeus, when, fearing the jealousy of the god, he deals craftily with him. Hence the punishment in which the whole miserable race of mankind is involved. Strange to say, this punishment comes through the smiling enchantress who is so deeply to wound his spirit—Pandora, the gracious image of the eternal feminine element—who brings to him

"A casket full of diseases and corroding cares,
And Hope alone remains entire within."[2]

[1] Hesiod, "Theogony," 1239—40.
[2] Hesiod, "Works and Days," 95—96.

Hesiod draws a gloomy picture of the destiny of mortals.

"And now unnumber'd woes o'er mortals reign,
Alike infected is the land and main.
O'er human race distempers silent stray
And multiply their strength by night and day."[1]

Such is the fate of man in this "rough iron age," which has succeeded to the glorious felicities of the sons of Saturn during the age of gold. The impiety of men has put an end to this blissful era, and in the two succeeding periods, the age of silver, and the age of brass, good is much alloyed with manifold ills. But a yet sterner doom awaits them. The poet exclaims:—

"Oh! would I had my hours of life began
Before this fifth, this sinful race of man;
Or had I not been call'd to breathe the day,
Till the rough iron age had passed away!
For now, the times are such, the gods ordain
That every moment shall be winged with pain.
Condemned to sorrows and to toil we live;
Rest to our labour death alone can give.[2]
* * * *
"Oh, how degenerate is the human state;
Strict honesty and naked truth shall fail,
The perjured villain, in his arts prevail.
Hoarse envy shall, unseen, exert her voice,
Attend the wretched and in ill rejoice.
Justice and modesty at length do fly,
Robed their fair limbs in white, and gain the sky.
From the wide earth they reach the blessed abodes,
And join the great assembly of the gods,
While wretched men, abandoned to their grief,
Sink in their sorrows, hopeless of relief."

We should form a very inadequate idea of Greece if we were to ignore this dark and tragic aspect of her religion, which is often passed by, lost as it were in the effulgence of her heroic and æsthetic life. This hidden sorrow, intensified by reflection, was all the more poignant because it arose out of the very nature of things, or to speak more exactly, out of the very nature of her gods, Jupiter included. Did he not as a god betray jealousy of man and a desire to keep him in humiliating bondage?

[1] Hesiod, "Works and Days," 100—103. [2] Ibid., 173—177, 187—199.

Other sentiments, as we know, reacted against this fatalism of evil, and the idea of a just and benevolent god often rent the thick veil of lingering naturism. We shall see that a hope of reconciliation arises in the end for the Titan-benefactor of mankind. In a new phase of the religious evolution, his unhappy fate is attributed to the thought of pride and rebellion, which blended with the benefits he sought to heap upon mankind, and to his impious attempt to deceive Jupiter by offering him a mock sacrifice, in which he was cheated of the best part of the victims. In the pathetic story of the destiny of man, as given by Hesiod, we have already an anticipation of the true solution of the enigma of evil. More than once men are charged with being the authors of their own misfortunes.

"Is there a man whom incorrupt we call,
Who sits alike unprejudiced to all,
By him the city nourishes in peace
His borders lengthen and his sons increase.
From him all-seeing Jove will drive afar
All civil discord and the rage of war.
No days of famine to the righteous fall,
But all is plenty, and delightful all.
* * * *
Not thus the wicked who in ill delight,
Whose daily acts pervert the rules of right,
To these the wise disposer Jove ordains
Repeated losses and a world of pains;
* * * *
Exactly mark, ye rulers of mankind,
The ways of truth nor be to justice blind;
Consider all ye do, and all ye say,
The holy demons to their god convey
Aerial spirits by great Jove designed
To be on earth, the guardians of mankind,
Invisible to mortal eyes they go
And mark our actions good or bad below.
Th' immortal spies with watchful care preside,
And thrice ten thousand round their charges glide.
Justice, unspotted maid, derived from Jove,
Renowned and reverenced by the gods above
When mortals violate her sacred laws,
When judges hear the bribe, and not the cause,
Close by her parent god behold her stand,
And urge the punishment their crimes demand.[1]

[1] Hesiod, "Works and Days," 223—229, 236—239, 246—260.

The great paradox, which underlies the whole cosmogony of Hesiod remains nevertheless, since it is taken for granted that evil is among the first principles of all things; but the voice of conscience has been lifted up and must make itself heard in spite of all merely intellectual resistance. The saying of the poet is no longer true, that no remedy is left for the ills of mortals.

If they have offended their god, this god does not punish them arbitrarily and capriciously. It is possible to appease him and it is through atonement that man seeks restoration. The motive which made Zeus lift his arm against Prometheus, and against man, was not, mere envy, as the poet had at first implied, but the vindication of his just claims. As humanism progresses, the moral sentiment prevails more and more in Greece over the contradictions of naturism, and she is the more bent on seeking a sufficient expiation for sin. We shall see how this high endeavour brings out a new development of the divine idea in the heart of this noble race, which seemed in the Homeric poems to apprehend it only as a distant shining ideal.

§ III.—The Greek Cultus.

Let us enquire, in the first place, in what way the Greek religion in its ordinary observance, met this craving for inward satisfaction, before we pass on to observe what attempts were made to supplement its deficiencies. The cultus among the Greeks, as among all Aryans, was at first of a private and family character, addressing itself primarily to the ancestors, who were worshipped under the name of Manes, after their ashes had been laid under the stone of the family hearth which was the first altar.[1]

The Manes were the objects of constant worship. Every meal began with a libation in their honour. The sacrifices offered to them were preceded by acts of purification. We do not assert that the worship of the Manes was the only cultus, and was not even then supplemented by the adoration of the gods of naturism, but it possessed

[1] See M. Fustel de Coulanges' able work, "La cité antique."

for a time in Greece the preponderance which always belonged to it in Rome.

The fatherland, as the name itself indicates, is closely connected with the worship of the fathers. The city often had a central altar, of which Vesta was the tutelary goddess. On this a perpetual fire burned. The great gods of the fatherland were its true penates. Their statues were placed in the *cella* of the temple, which was divided from the profane portions by the portico. As the house of a benevolent god, the sanctuary offered a shelter to all fugitives, even slaves. This right of asylum, so rarely violated, was the august sign of the divine hospitality. The religious feasts were designed to celebrate the glory of the gods, by giving a representation of the legends concerning them. Thus the procession of worshippers was of great importance. The Greek priesthood was not an exclusive class. At first it was universal in its character. Every father of a family fulfilled the office for the penates of his own household. Even the priesthood engaged in public worship, did not constitute a caste. So long as the Greek cities had kings, these were the first priests, a human and lay character being thus attached to the priesthood. When it became fixed in certain families, they were not on that account excluded from common life, in which the priests themselves took their part. Subsequently, the priesthood became elective, a clear proof of the absence of the exclusive spirit of caste. It was not the less held in honour and amply remunerated, both by the sacrifices and by pious foundations left to the temples. The idea of purity was moreover always associated with the priesthood; thus there were manifold rites of purification to be observed by the officiating priest.

The priestly office must be distinguished from the mantic art or interpretation of oracles, which played so important a part in Greece, especially at Delphi. We shall see how a religious guild, isolated from the rest of the country, grew up there, with the character of fixity, necessary for the maintenance of the tradition. Hymns in honour of the gods were an important part of worship. The choruses sang and danced at the same time.

In the religion of Greece, as in all the nature-religions, sacrifice was, in the first place, an offering to the gods, designed to procure their favour by making them sharers in man's best, and even by offering them sacred food. The libation conveyed the healing draught to them through fissures in the ground. The victim when consumed by fire, served them as food. In later times their worshippers ate in their name, the meat on the altar. The gods breathed in the smoke of the holocaust. Sacrifices were indefinitely multiplied. They were offered on all special occasions in private and public life. Every sacrifice was accompanied with a prayer to all the gods. The sacrifices soon assumed a more elevated character, when expiatory virtue began to be attributed to tham. There were also holy ablutions which were sometimes real baptisms. It is beyond question that the shedding of the blood of the victim had a holier significance than the holocaust, which was merely designed to supply the aliment for the gods. As the sacrifice was looked upon as a means of expiating sin, its virtue was supposed to be in proportion to the dignity of the sufferer. Hence, in remote times, human sacrifices were offered—a practice perpetuated even in the days of Homer, as we gather from the sacrifice of the daughter of Agamemnon. There is abundant evidence of the expiatory intention of these sacrifices of blood, and especially of the human sacrifices. Of this we have examples at Athens, where Erechtheus sacrificed his daughters, and at Thebes where Tiresias ordered Creon to offer up his son.[1] In Bœotia, where an epidemic plague broke out in consequence of the murder of a priest of Bacchus, the Delphic oracle commanded the sacrifice of a noble youth to appease the god.[2] Human sacrifices were soon abandoned, and certain animals, to which a substitutionary value was attached, became the victims instead.

M. Maury well says: "If a Greek thought himself pursued by fate, or if he had committed any crime, he was convinced that by his guilty act he had drawn down the anger of some deity, which he sought to avert by sacrifices

[1] Euripides, "Phœnic." v. 927. [2] Pausanias, ix. c. 8.

and rites of a particular nature. He offered a sort of compensation for his crime, which he regarded as a direct offence against the gods. In the first category of crimes needing expiation were sacrilege, the theft of sacred objects, and murder, especially murder perpetrated in a temple. It was supposed that the god might be appeased by rites in which the crime was transferred to animals, or objects without life. The pig was the animal most commonly used for such expiations." [1]

All these attempts to appease the wrath of the gods failed however to satisfy the conscience. Something was still lacking. There was wanting a god who should himself share in the atonement and thus give it true efficacy. The sense of this great need brought about the most important evolution in the religious history of Greece.

[1] For a detailed description of the Greek worship and of its sacrifices, the reader is referred to c. vii. and xii. of M. Maury's "Histoire des religions de la Grèce."

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION OF GREECE IN ITS FULL DEVELOPMENT.

§ I.—The Worship of Apollo.

"IN the entire religious life of the Greeks," says Curtius, "no great epoch is more clearly marked than nthe first appearance of Apollo."[1] We have already seen this brilliant son of Jupiter first shining in the heavens as a solar god, then reappearing in mythologic legend in conflict with the black serpents, the symbols of the dark powers of evil, or again in distant pilgrimage among the Hyperboreans, representing the departure of the sun, or at least, the diminution of its powers in the wan winter days.

We observe the trace of these solar myths in the cruel death of the beloved of Apollo, the beautiful young Hyacinthus, devoured like the Phrygian Adonis, by a wild beast. The worship of Apollo always retained indeed the traces of its naturalistic origin, but it received a new and grand moral development after the period of the Homeric poems. Even in the religions of the East, the glorious luminary of the sky had become to a large extent a sublime symbol to his worshippers. They ascribed to him purity and omniscience. We know to how high a place the god of light was raised in the Avesta and even in the Vedas, while still retaining the impersonal character which is always the weakness of the Oriental theodicy. The genius of Greece sets upon him the seal of a human individuality. His attributes become moral qualities combining to form the living unity of a person instead of a mere abstraction.

[1] Jules Girard, v. 187—194. See also Curtius, vol. ii. book ii. ch. iv.

At first Apollo appears to us as the god of the sweet springtime, and of rural life; the heavenly shepherd leading his flocks to the mountains. He calls up before us an image of peace, of pure felicity.[1] He is at the same time, the god of the lyre, with the Muses for companions; the god of song and music, the inspirer of all poetry. But this firstborn of light is above all the god of prophecy, the great revealer to men of the thought and will of Zeus. Nor does he merely reveal the law of good. He is also the Purifier, the Restorer, in a word the atoning god. He has had need to make expiation for himself; for though he is the beneficent god, he is also the god who slays, the terrible archer whose deathful dart, like the burning ray of the sun, consumes the life it has created. His silver bow is as formidable as the weighty arms of Ares. But it is not in his nature to smite past recovery. Those whom he wounds, he heals. His divine son Æsculapius represents this aspect of his nature, which is one of the noblest. There is, however, an evil more to be dreaded than plague or pestilence. This is the sin which defiles the soul and arouses the anger of the gods, such defilement reaching its culminating point in murder. Apollo was able to wash away this stain even from the most guilty, all the more because he had himself known the need of purification and expiation; for though he had wrought a great deliverance in slaying the Lernean Hydra, he had nevertheless contracted the defilement which necessarily follows murder, and his long captivity with Admetus was his expiation. This sovereign god had had then his access of passion. The memory of it was perpetuated every year during the barbarous ages, by the immolation of human victims chosen from among great criminals; and subsequently by the sending away into the desert of a youth who represented the exile of the god. His power to deliver knew no bounds. If the fugitive murderer received on his brow the blood of the atoning victim, and was touched by the sacred laurel, he was thus placed under the protection of

[1] Upon this development of the myth of Apollo, see Preller, vol. i. Decharme, c. v.

the merciful god. Hence Apollo was called the saviour-god, and was regarded as the redeemer from moral evil.*

It was through the power of these consolatory beliefs that the worship of Apollo exerted so great an influence at Delphi, which became for centuries the focus of the nationality of Greece and the chief sanctuary of her religion. In this secluded valley in the heart of Greece the prophet-god gave his oracles. It was believed that the Pythoness, who was his organ, received her inspiration from the smoke rising from the burning entrails of the earth. The Delphic oracles were not necessarily prophecies, for they dealt less with the future than with the present. The solutions they gave of the different problems presented to them, were inspired by ancient national tradition, piously preserved by the priests of Delphi. It cannot be denied that these priests were often guided in their replies by the intuitions of conscience; thus their great influence was sometimes beneficial, in spite of the enigmatic character of their oracles.

The distant colonies received with peculiar deference oracles which seemed to them the very voice of the father-land, an echo of the voice of the great gods. The Delphic priesthood had thus far more influence than the old Amphictyonics. It did much to maintain the unity of Hellenism in the midst of the rivalries of the various separate states. Its counsels were decisive, whenever the question raised was one affecting the cultus or the practice of religion. The oracle was very far from being a mere vulgar imposture.

It was under this influence of Apollo that another institution arose, which was no less favourable to the maintenance of the unity of Greece—the institution of the Olympic games, to which the Isthmian and Nemean games were afterwards added. In these great jousts the aim was to give harmonious development at once to body and mind, by aiming at an ideal of beauty, strength and intelligence, which was simply the ideal of a perfect manhood. The wrestling, horse and chariot-racing, boxing, running in armour, throwing the spear, and shooting with the bow, were followed by nobler contests, chiefly of music and poetry. All these games were entered into as religious

duties. The laurel which crowned the victor was plucked from the sacred tree of Apollo.

It would be erroneous to suppose, however, that in this Delphic worship, including the great yearly games, the only thing aimed at was the symmetrical and harmonious development of man's physical and intellectual qualities.[1] We must not forget the poignant sense of guilt and the yearning for reparation and expiation which Apollo himself had felt before urging on his worshippers to offer atoning sacrifices. Greece did indeed aspire to realise the true and perfect harmonies of life; but she knew also that discord had fallen upon this perfect harmony and that the jarring element needed to be removed. She knew that it was not only by the well-balanced development of all the natural faculties that true harmony could be restored, but by means of an atonement which it must be hers to seek at the hands of the most brilliant of her gods.

§ II.—The Worship of Athena.

Development of Hellenism under Pericles.

Whatever importance may have become attached at Delphi to the worship of Apollo, who was undoubtedly at first the great god of the Dorians, he soon had to share the religious hegemony with another divinity who exerted an influence no less considerable over the development of Greece. Athens, without making anything like a schism, and while long remaining faithful to Delphi, had her special cultus, which was, in truth, the highest personification and most brilliant idealisation of her own genius. It was presented to the glorious divinity who bore her name. Athena or Minerva often appears as the true sister of Apollo. Like him she is a warrior, and victory her faithful companion. She diffuses her benefits over the earth, as her worshipper is reminded by the mild lustre of the silver-leaved olive which is dedicated to her. She pre-

[1] On this point we differ from M. Jules Girard. He sees in Hellenism only an evolution in the direction of harmony. We see in it the painful effort to restore a harmony broken by sin and evil.

sides also over the birth of children. But this ancient goddess of the dawn becomes more and more identified with thought. Sprung from the very head of Zeus, a direct emanation from the supreme intellect, she scatters lavishly all gifts of the spirit, and quickens every active faculty, from the lowly wit of the woman whose deft fingers weave bright textures to adorn her husband or her home, to the genius that creates the master-pieces of art. In a word, she is the divine type of thought. She is the spotless virgin of Greece, the very impersonation of purity. The temple of the goddess on the Acropolis is an immortal type of the most perfect art.

The festivals kept in her honour were noble and pure like herself. "The festival of Athene in the capital became the political collective festival, the Panathenæa; the sanguinary days of feuds were forgotten, and with the new national festival was united for all times the sacrificial worship of the goddess of peace."[1] At the great Panathenæa, when all the *élite* of Athens were gathered together, a splendid robe for Athena was borne up to the citadel. "On this piece of tapestry were woven the deeds of the goddess, as well as events of national history, and even the portraits of the citizens who had deserved well of the city."[2] At the head of the solemn procession marched the priests, those who assisted in the worship, the magistrates appointed to the charge of sacred things, and lastly a chorus of young girls. In the centre of the procession were led the victims for the sacrifice. A group of old men remarkable for their beauty, swung branches of the olive tree. "Lastly they were joined by the victors of all the previous days, the handsomest and strongest Athenians of all ages, in chariots, on horseback and on foot, splendidly equipped, crowned with wreaths and arranged in solemn order,—the flower of the civic community presenting itself to the divinity of the State."[3]

In this admirable development of Hellenic civilisation we must recognise the share taken by one man, who has well deserved to give his name to the century. Pericles is the most perfect type of the genius of Greece in its full

[1] Curtius, vol. i. Book ii. p. 302. [2] Ibid., vol ii. Book iii. p. 578.
[3] Ibid., p. 578.

maturity and consciousness of its own powers. The grandest representative of the higher literary, artistic and philosophical culture of his time, he possessed what has been well called, the divine gift of government. He ruled by the ascendancy of his genius and by his eloquence over a democracy whose privileges he broadened, and whose hours of toil he relaxed, but whom he never oppressed. On the field of battle, as in the agora, he stands unrivalled, always maintaining that calm dignity which accompanies complete self-possession.

The development of such a democracy calls out all the faculties of man, since the duties of the state were not delegated to specialists but devolved upon all citizens. Never did the tree of humanity put forth freer and more fruitful branches. Pericles did all in his power to attract to Athens the masters of art from the whole of Greece. At the same time he returned with usury all that he borrowed, for he was ever ready to spare the greatest artists to go wherever they were needed to renew and embellish the sanctuaries of the fatherland.[1]

Athens was placed in a position of singular advantage for the development of the higher culture in every department. We know with what enthusiasm the beautiful site of their city inspired her inhabitants. We need only remind the reader of the famous chorus in Œdipus Coloneus.

"Here, as heaven drops its dew,
Narcissus grows with fair bells clustered o'er
Wreath to the Dread Ones due
The Mighty Goddesses whom we adore;
And here is seen the crocus, golden-eyed;
The sleepless streams ne'er fail;
Still wandering on they glide,
And clear Kephisos waters all the vale;
Daily each night and morn
It winds through all the wide and fair champaign,
And pours its flood new-born
From the clear freshets of the fallen rain;
The Muses scorn it not,
But here, rejoicing, their high feast days hold,
And here, in this blest spot,
Dwells Aphrodite in her ear of gold."[2]

[1] See Curtius, "History of Greece," vol. ii. Book iii. etc.
[2] Œdipus at Colonus, 680—696, E. H. Plumptre's Trans.

In the closing lines Sophocles points to the highest glory of Athens. Eloquence, poetry, art, history, philosophy, all attained under Pericles a degree of perfection never to be equalled, for never again, surely, can humanity know so fair a spring-time so marvellously adorned.

The whole scope of the civilisation of Athens is characterised by Thucydides in a few strokes of genius, which show how wonderful was the stimulus it gave to the free development of individual gifts. He says: "We have the advantage of not suffering beforehand from coming troubles, and of proving ourselves when we are involved in them, no less bold than those who are always toiling, so that our country is worthy of admiration in those respects, and in others besides.

"For we study taste with economy, and philosophy without effeminacy; and employ wealth rather for opportunity of action than for boastfulness of talking; while poverty is nothing disgraceful for a man to confess, but not to escape from it by exertion is more disgraceful. Again, the same men can attend at the same time to domestic as well as to public affairs; and others who are engaged with business, can still form a sufficient judgment on political questions. For we are the only people that consider the man who takes no part in these things, not as unofficious, but as useless; and we ourselves judge rightly of measures, at any rate, if we do not originate them; while we do not regard words as any hindrance to deeds, but rather consider it a hindrance not to have been previously instructed by word, before undertaking in deed what we have to do. . . . In short, I may say, that both the whole city is a school for Greece, and that in my opinion, the same individual would amongst us prove himself qualified for the most varied kinds of action, and with the most graceful versatility." [1]

If Athens was the centre of Hellenic culture, it had no monopoly of the gentle arts. Each race supplied its contingent, and the Doric genius united with the Ionian to swell the glory of the common fatherland. A rapid glance

[1] Thucydides, Book ii. 39—41.

over the history of literature and art during this period, will enable us to follow the progressive development of the genius of Greece, and will prepare us to comprehend the other evolution going on in her religious consciousness.[1]

We have observed the influence of the Homeric epic on the development of the religion of Greece, in the preceding period. When individuality, fostered by the democratic system of government, had asserted its rights, a new order of poetry arose—the lyric—in which the feelings and impressions of the writer found free scope. The elegies of Tyrtæus and Simonides speak the language of their hearts; and Archilochus uses his terrible iambics as a weapon of vengeance. The individuality is still more marked in the Lesbian poetry, of which we may take Sappho and Anacreon as examples—the verses of the former all aglow with intensity of feeling, those of the latter all slight, voluptuous, brilliant badinage.

But it was the Doric race which gave to Greece him whom we may call the lyric Homer. Pindar, the Bœotian poet was the singer of the whole of Greece to a far greater degree than his predecessors Stesichorus and Ibycus. "He belongs," says Otfried Müller, "to that period of the Greek nation when its great qualities were first distinctly unfolded, and when it exhibited an energy of action, and a spirit of enterprise, never afterwards surpassed, together with a love of poetry, art and philosophy, which produced much and promised to produce more."[2] We shall see presently how luminously he brought out the essential idea of Hellenism, the idea of the hero—the ideal Greek. The appearance of the great dramatic poet coincides with the complete triumph of Hellenism over the religion of nature. The drama is only possible when man is no longer regarded as the slave or the puppet of natural forces. Until this is realised there is only one actor on the scene, namely nature; art is limited to describing the regular revolutions of nature under expressive symbols like those of Adonis or Osiris. But where

[1] On this subject nothing can surpass Otfried Müller's "History of the Literature of Ancient Greece," nor his "Kunstarchæologische Werke."

[2] "Literature of Ancient Greece," p. 216.

humanism supersedes naturism, the destiny of man becomes the absorbing centre of interest. Its vast possibilities are recognised, and art enters the sphere of morals. Hence the importance of the glorious development of dramatic poetry at Athens, the religious significance of which will come before us presently.

Another fact no less important is the rise of a school of really literary prose writers. Poetry, as more directly the result of inspiration, is more impersonal than prose, which is the clear and precise language of the historian, the orator and the philosopher. It is the language of action. Hence good prose writing implies an advanced state of society in which man has definite recognised rights. The prose of Herodotus showed the influence of the epic. The prose of Pericles and Thucydides was more close and vigorous, its æsthetic beauty being derived from the harmonious use of language and the logical sequence of ideas.

A similar development is traceable in art, which in Greece more than in any other country, expresses and sums up the various phases of civilisation and the crises of religious thought. During the Pelasgic period it was coarse and rude, confining itself to the erection of wooden temples, without symmetry or elegance. The artist did not attempt at this time to represent the gods, who were not so much distinct personalities as vague impersonations of natural forces. These were adequately represented by a few symbolic signs, stones roughly hewn, or columns more or less ornate. Such were the ancient Hermes, to which some impure symbols were soon added. Greek art did not essay a higher flight, till long after the heroic ideal had found expression in the poems of Homer and his immediate successors. Attempts were indeed made to represent the divinity by wooden images roughly carved, but there was neither life nor movement in these early statues. The feet were not separated, the eyes were marked by one stroke, and the hands remained glued, as it were, to the body. The artists of this remote period were called *dædalidæ*, *dædala* being the name given to the ancient wooden statues of the gods.

The painting of the sacred vessels was characterised by the same clumsiness and lifelessness. In the following period (580—460 B.C.) the artistic development corresponds to the development of Hellenism. Architecture already rising above its primitive barbarism, reaches a high degree of perfection in the construction of the temples. It expresses the twofold genius of the Greeks by two very distinct styles. While the Doric column, rising directly from the ground and bare of all elaborate ornamentation in its capital, faithfully represents the manly, vigorous character of the Dorian race, the Ionian column, resting on a pedestal, and with convoluted, and tastefully mounted capital, reproduces the grace and vivacity of the Ionians.

The Greek temple which at first only has columns in the façade, soon introduces them into the interior, arranging them round the *cella* where stands the statue of the divinity. It thus early acquires a character of symmetry and unity which makes it a harmonious whole, in contrast to the vast formless temple of Egypt, and the monstrous pagoda of India. Every part of the building has manifestly its proper place, and due relation to the rest. It is this fitness of proportion and grace of outline, not massiveness or profusion of costly materials, which constitute the beauty of Greek architecture. It is an intellectual not a material beauty. It would be as impossible for Oriental pantheism to produce this style of beauty as for it to inspire an Iliad. Sculpture does not arrive at perfection in Greece so soon as architecture, and religious sculpture is the most backward because fettered by tradition. The sculptor goes on carving in wood, which he overlays with gold and ivory, thus sacrificing the æsthetic to the brilliant and costly. The gods are represented seated, with a solemn and even austere expression on their stolid faces.

Sculpture finds a wider scope outside religious art. The human model which it begins to copy finds its most perfect development in the Hellenic race, and the gymnastic games give favourable opportunities for anatomical study. The friezes of the temple soon begin to be adorned with statues representing the combats of the heroic age.

The Ægina marbles, so admired at Munich, belong

to this period. They show us exactly what the ancient style was. It is to be recognised by the regularity of the folds of the costume, the symmetrical curling of the hair, the tension of the fingers, and a general character of rigidity through the whole body. The statue is not, however, fettered and immovable as in the preceding period. It has received a quickening impulse, but only to a sort of mechanical life. The features are strongly marked, but there is no soul in them as yet; they are not lighted up by a ray of beauty from within.

The next period (from Pericles to Alexander, 460—330 B.C.) was the great art era of Greece. Æschylus and Sophocles then gave in their poetry sublime expression to the ideal of the Hellenic race, while Phidias immortalised it in marble, gold, or ivory, and lent it a yet deeper and purer meaning. The statue is not only mobile as in the previous period, it becomes positively living under the chisel of the great artist. It has the suppleness, the natural charm, the freedom of life, and an indefinable grace never since equalled. The marble breathes, as says the poet. We have only to compare the Greek statue with the Egyptian, to appreciate the difference in the two orders of civilisation. Humanism sets free the human form divine. It advances; it moves at will; the hands are no longer bound to the side, the feet no longer rigid and motionless. Life throbs in the once inert body; man treads as with the step of a conqueror the earth on which he was formerly a slave, and the elasticity of his step bears witness to the lightness of his heart. He throws the dart and handles the sword with heroic grace. Some of the works of Scopas belong to this great period. The best known are the Pythian Apollo and the group of the sons and daughters of Niobe. In this group the figures retain their quiet beauty in spite of the cruel anguish of the scene. Lysippus, who also belonged to the school of Argos, aimed rather to idealise human beauty. He delighted in the production of athletes, but his favourite subject was Hercules.

Architecture, the elder sister of sculpture, benefited by all the progress of her sister art, and reached her apogee in the same period. In proof of this we need only

name the Pantheon, which is among the temples of Greece what the Olympian Jupiter is among statues. The Parthenon was dedicated to the purely intellectual deity worshipped in Athens. The building, which was of the Doric order of architecture, bore an impress of grave beauty quite in harmony with the worship of the immortal virgin.

A new order of architecture—the Corinthian—which substituted the acanthus leaf for the Ionian scroll in the capital, belongs to this period of incomparable artistic fruitfulness. The temple of Jupiter Olympus adorned with the famous statue of Phidias, is a monument of its greatness. It is the temple of triumphant humanism, and consequently the climax of Hellenic art. The young and victorious god, represented glowing with pride because he has mortally wounded the Python, is the radiant image of the triumph of humanity over the ancient gods. That which is specially admirable in the great sculptures of this period is the union of beauty and majesty; the grave and quiet serenity expressed in the noble, chiselled features. "The soul" says Winckelmann, "only shows itself like a reflection in quiet waters. It never bursts impetuously forth. In the representations of the deepest grief, the feeling is always restrained from excess; and the sweetest joys stir the soul only as a zephyr kisses the young leaves." Never did a nation better express her genius in her works than Greece. She seems herself to live before us in the representation of her favourite goddesses, exalting at once the dignity and the beauty of man, calm and majestic, gracious and grand, ready for feast or fight.

We have already named the immortal artist of this period. The Pallas and Jupiter Olympus of Phidias are his two great works, and indeed are the masterpieces of the art of sculpture.[1] These statues, executed in colossal proportions in the finest material, give to the gods a sublime expression of majesty and beauty. They did much to purify the religious idea. The fragments preserved of the friezes of the Parthenon, show that the great sculptor was no less skilful in representing the tumult of battle

[1] See "Le Jupiter Olympien," Quatremère de Quincy.

than the sublime calm of the gods. Whatever subject he treated, he always remained faithful to his high ideal, and preserved, without emasculating, the highest beauty of form.

No one has described better than Goethe, the influence exerted by Phidias in purifying the type of the divine. He says: "A masterpiece of art once created, once given to the world in its ideal reality, produces an ineffaceable impression—the deepest of all impressions. In fact, as it is from the concentration of all the powers that it derives its inspiration, so it sums up in itself all that is noble and worthy of respect. It gives soul to the human form, and consequently raises the man above himself and makes a god of him in this present state—a state which holds in itself all the past and the future. Such were the thoughts which forced themselves on all who looked upon the Jupiter Olympus. The god had become man that he might lift man up to himself. The beholder felt himself in the presence of the highest majesty and became enamoured of perfect beauty."[1] We know what an impression the Jupiter Olympus produced upon Paulus Æmilius, who felt his knees bend before its divine majesty.

The great paintings of Polygnotus at Delphi had the same effect as the immortal marbles of Phidias. Aristotle said of him that he painted men more beautiful than nature. This shows how far he went in his pursuit of the human ideal. On one of the two courts of the temple which he had to decorate, he drew a pathetic representation of the fall of Troy. He thus raised to the highest point, the national sentiment which had just manifested itself so heroically in the war of independence, while recalling at the same time, the cost of such heroism. His second picture represented the future life. On the one side, were depicted the tortures of great rebels, and on the other, the pure blessedness of the just, at the head of whom the painter placed Orpheus, as the type of the genius of Greece, and as a sublime impersonation of poetry and art in their idealising mission. Polycletus of Sicyon, the sculptor of the Juno of Argos, was the worthy rival of Phidias. After him came Praxiteles, who was scarcely

[1] Goethe, "Winckelmann."

less skilful with his chisel, but whose inspiration was of a less noble order. He delighted in reproducing the sensuous beauty of Aphrodite. His Venuses are sirens, not grossly voluptuous, which would be incompatible with true art, but of a dainty and insinuating voluptuousness not less dangerous. We feel that the reign of the courtesan has begun, and that Greece is already declining from the pure heights to which for a brief moment she had climbed.

§ III.—DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSCIENCE OF GREECE ON THE HUMAN SIDE.—THE GREAT MYSTERIES.—THE TRAGEDIES.

It was nevertheless in this brilliant city of Athens, revelling as it did in natural and artistic beauty, that the conscience of Greece was awakened to most earnest thought on the great problem of the destinies of man. It is indeed impossible for humanism to develop itself broadly and freely without arousing the voice of conscience, and with it a sense of the deeper mysteries of life. Thus in the midst of the enchantment of art and the noble intoxication of heroism, bursts in what Æschylus calls "the hymn without a lyre," of the Furies, those terrible avengers of the broken moral law. This is the great soul-tragedy, the dark mystery enacted in the depths of the awe-struck spirit. Poetry, like religion, is bound at all costs, to give scope to thoughts which reach out beyond the present life. We shall see that dramatic poetry in its noblest epoch, derived its deepest pathos from these thoughts; while the religious instinct sought satisfaction in new modes of worship offered to gods hitherto obscure. The mysteries of Eleusis were a final attempt to give an adequate response to the aspirations which the worship of Apollo at Delphi had failed either to silence or to satisfy.[1]

We have seen how the problem of the destiny of man presented itself to old Hesiod in all its difficulty. Whence, he asked, the strange wrath of this jealous god, who

[1] See Jules Girard, "Le sentiment réligieux en Grèce d'Homère, à Eschyle," Book II. c. ii. There is a very interesting study of Theognis in M. Henri Bois' thesis on "La poésie gnomique chez les Hébreux et chez les Grecs."

seems to punish, as a crime, man's efforts after progress? Must he not be an offended god? This seems the necessary conclusion from what the author of the Theodicy says of the rebellions to be laid to the charge of unhappy mortals. The expiations offered at Delphi have not availed to reconcile guilty man with the great Zeus. The same problem was stated a second time some centuries later, with impassioned force, by Theognis the poet, who lived in the great era of the war of independence. He goes so far as to call in question the justice of the gods, showing that upon earth, crime often goes unpunished, while the good are overwhelmed with ills. The complaint of Job bursts forth abruptly from the midst of this aristocratic poetry, which breathes the proudest disdain of the common people, and seems sometimes to sum up all morality in a wise moderation. There was a day when Theognis, seizing his stern lyre, sent up the complaint of earth to that heaven, from which good and evil seemed to come down at hazard.

"Kind Jove, I marvel at thee, for thou rulest over all, having honour thyself and vast power. Well knowest thou the mind of man and the spirit of each; and thy might, O king, is highest of all. How is it, O son of Saturn, that thy purpose has the heart to hold men that are sinners, and the just man, in the same portion, both if thy mind shall have been turned towards moderation, and if towards the insolence of men yielding to unjust deeds. Neither is anything defined by the deity for mortals, nor the way in which walking, a man may please the immortals. But nevertheless they hold wealth harmless; while they who keep their mind aloof from worthless deeds, still are wont to find the mother of poverty, want of means, though they love what is just; *want of means*, which leads on the spirit of men to error, hurting their minds within their bosoms by strong necessity."[1]

Attempts had been made before the time of Theognis to explain by solidarity, this terrible inequality in the allotment of good and ill with its apparent injustice. The sons were made to bear the fatal consequences of the

[1] Maxims of Theognis, 373—393. Banks' Trans.

faults and crimes of their fathers. Solon had set forth this solution of the problem of man's destinies in admirable words:—

"Punishment brought down by violence, is at first only as a tiny spark, but in the end it makes itself grievously felt, for works of violence are not to go on for ever. But Jupiter sees the end of all things. His watchful eye is ever on the criminal, in spite of all he shows himself at last. But expiation comes at once for some; for others, not till later. If the guilty themselves escape, if the justice of the gods does not fall upon them, it will yet come one day; innocent children in generations to come will pay the debt of their fathers."

Theognis indignantly rejects this transference of the punishment of the guilty to the innocent. "O Father Jove, would that it might please the gods, that their insolence should delight sinners, and that this might be agreeable to their mind, namely, that whoso ruthlessly works daring deeds in his heart, nowise standing in awe of the gods, that he, I say, thereafter should atone for his evil deeds, and that the fathers' infatuation should not in aftertime be a woe to the children; but that children, who, being born of an unjust sire, know and do justice, reverencing thy wrath, O son of Chronos, and from the very first loving the right amongst the citizens, should not pay the penalty for any transgression of their sires. May these things be agreeable to the blessed gods: but now he that commits wicked deeds escapes, and another presently suffers the punishment. Then how, O king of immortals, is it just, that whoso is aloof from unrighteous deeds, holding no transgression nor sinful oath, but being righteous, should suffer what is not just? What other mortal, too, I pray, when he looks at *this* man, would afterwards stand in awe of the gods, and entertaining what feeling? When an unrighteous infatuated man, having avoided the wrath neither of any man, nor of the immortals in any wise, doeth wrongs and is glutted with wealth; whereas the righteous are wasted, being worn out by severe poverty.[1]

[1] Theognis, "Maxims," 731-752.

Theognis is thus thrown back on the dismal thought that the gods are envious of mortals, but he cannot accept it without uttering an indignant protest in the name of outraged conscience. His blasphemy is indeed an unwitting prayer to a god greater and holier than the god he knows. Placing as he does in strong relief, the contradiction between the sense of justice and the facts of life—those at least which he has before him—between the ideal and the real, he urges on the conscience of Greece to work out for itself a new creed by which it may be reconciled with its gods. Accordingly, he appeals from all these inequities to Jupiter, the king of the immortals.

The only way to exonerate him from being a god of envy and caprice, is first to insist on the final issues of justice beyond the grave; and next to look upon the sufferings of earth in the light of chastisement rather than of expiation. Chastisement of the fathers' sins may, according to the mysterious law of solidarity, be visited on the sons without compromising the divine justice and holiness, if only reparation is possible in another life. We shall see these two great ideas fully worked out in the mysteries, the first in the mysteries of Demeter and Proserpine, the second in those of Bacchus. They were only the response to the aspirations of the noblest minds.

Although as we have already remarked, both the family and the city in ancient times sedulously observed the worship of the deceased ancestry, who had become the Manes and Penates of the household, nothing could be more incomplete and vague than the notions of the Greek of the Homeric period, as to the future life. The region into which the dead passed, was to them a shadowy land, where disembodied heroes wandered about in a cold pale moonlight, looking back wistfully upon their past life. Achilles says to his friend Patroclus, who has passed through the gloomy gates of Hades :—

"But draw thou near; and in one short embrace
Let us, while yet we may, our grief indulge.
Thus as he spoke, he spread his longing arms,
But nought he clasped; and with a wailing cry
Vanished like smoke, the spirit beneath the earth.

> Up sprang Achilles all amazed, and smote
> His hands together, and lamenting cried:
> 'O heaven, there are then, in the realms below,
> Spirits and spectres unsubstantial all!'"[1]

The life of the soul is so associated with that of the body that if the body is unburied, the soul wanders despairingly through space. The idea of retributive justice begins to assert itself however, for the dead are judged by Minos. We have seen how Hesiod describes the terrible torture of the Titans, cast down by Jupiter into the depths of Tartarus. In this dark abode they are to be joined by all rebels and great offenders.

With Pindar the region beyond comes out in purer and clearer light.[2] He belongs to the grandest epoch of Hellenism. Born in 521 B.C., of an illustrious family, he was forty years of age at the battle of Salamis. He has all the aristocratic pride of his race and never bates a jot of it, even in view of that grand abode of the dead on the threshold of which all inequalities should vanish. Though he says that one end awaits us, whether we have been happy or unhappy,[3] and that "the wave of death comes alike to all, and falls on the inglorious and the glorious,"[4] he yet maintains a close relation between the heroes who are among the blessed and their descendants.

> "Their kindred's rite the dead shall share.
> Its praise departed virtue claims;
> The trump of glory echoes in the tomb."[5]

These glorified heroes are at once the models and the guardians of their posterity. Like a true son of Greece, Pindar is never weary of extolling the great national games, which he looks upon as the school of heroism. He celebrates them in odes to be used in processions on solemn occasions, to the accompaniment of music and

[1] Iliad, Book xxiii. 115—123, Lord Derby's Trans.

[2] Beside the works of Pindar and the chapters devoted to him by Jules Girard, we shall quote M. Croiset's work: "La poésie de Pindare et les lois du lyrisme grec." Paris, 1881.

[3] Nemean Odes, xi. 21.

[4] Ibid., vii. 44—46.

[5] Olympian Odes, viii. 102—105.

dancing. In one of these odes, to a victor in the "Pancratium," he says:—

> "To various needs man's various toils aspire,
> But most the conquering athlete burns
> For the rich lay that wakes the lyre,
> And waits on virtue's steps,
> Weaving the wreath she earns."[1]

Physical beauty is highly exalted; the poet praises one of his heroes for having acted in a manner worthy of his beauty. He speaks of him as

> "with manliest beauty graced,
> And rich in deeds that form to suit."[2]

The power of humanism unfolds itself in all its glory in the poetry of Pindar. He did not sacrifice however the divine to the human. No poet of his race did so much to clear the idea of God from the clouds which darkened it. He says: "Surely many things are wonderful, and in these sometimes fables, adorned beyond the truth with varied falsehoods, deceive the report of mortals . . . Now it is becoming to a man to speak what is good concerning the deities, for so is blame the less. O son of Tantalus, I will record thy story, not as men of yore have done . . . for to me it is impossible to call any of the blessed ones a glutton; I stand aloof from such a thought."[3] He does not formally repudiate the Homeric mythology, but he transforms and idealises it. He does not divorce the idea of the divine from moral perfection, but rather tries to bring them into unity. If Jupiter, whom he calls the king of the blessed, retains his pre-eminence, Pindar seems, in imitation of the Vedic poets, to have attributed the fulness of the divinity to each of the great gods of Olympus in turn. Their physical perfections have, in his view, primarily a symbolic value.[4] In noble language he celebrates their moral grandeur and above all, their omnipotence. "The deity accomplishes every end according to his wish—the deity that overtakes even the winged eagle and outstrips the ocean dolphin, and over-

[1] Nem. Ode, iii. 10—14.
[2] Ibid., 32—33.
[3] Olympian Odes, i. 43, 59—82.
[4] Croisette, p. 379.

throws one amongst haughty mortals, and to others grants unfading glory."[1] "Zeus dispenses various fortune; Zeus who is lord of all. But even such glories as these (victories in the games) love the joyful hymn of victory."[2]

"The man by fortune raised, that holds
Unflushed with pride his blameless course,
Though glory's wreath his front enfolds,
Or wealth with power hath blessed his store,
His country's praise to deathless fame shall give.
Yet but from thee th' exalted virtues flow,
All-bounteous Jove! and they that know
And fear thy laws, rejoice and live;
While he that walks sin's wandering way
Ends not in bliss the changeful day.
Reward awaits the virtuous deed;
The brave command the grateful lyre;
For them the applauding Graces lead
And swell the loud, triumphal choir.
* * * *
But time, as rolling seasons onward move,
His altering hand on all things lays;
The sons of gods alone, nor chance, nor change, can
wound."[3]

Pindar was exercised like the other poets, by the problem of man's destiny, but his firm belief in the immortality of the soul, which he regards as the only sufficient sanction of the moral law, prevents his sinking, like Theognis, into blasphemy and despair. "In brief period does the happiness of mortals increase, and so too does it fall to the ground, shaken by the stern decree of the deity. Creatures of a day! What are we? What are we not? Man is but the dream of a shadow. But yet when heaven-sent glory comes, brilliant light is present to mortals and gentle life."[4]

The first duty of this frail and ephemeral creature is to submit himself to the power of the gods, to prostrate himself before them and not to attempt to overstep the limitations of his lot, by seeking excessive prosperity. He ought to recognise in the succession of good and ill which the gods dispense to him, their fixed design not to permit him to enjoy unbroken or unclouded happiness. They

[1] Pythian Odes, ii. 90—96.
[2] Isthmian Odes, iv. 65—70.
[3] Ibid., Ode iii. 1—14, 29—31.
[4] Pythian Odes, viii. 130—139.

will not have him become their rival. Pindar says: "If thou understandest to read aright the recondite sense of legendary tales, thou knowest, being instructed by those of old, that, for one blessing, the immortals distribute two evils together for mortals. These *more numerous* evils, however, the foolish are not able to endure becomingly, but *the good do so endure them*, having turned their bright side out to view. . . . But if one of the mortals holdeth in his mind the way of truth, he ought (for that he has obtained them from the gods) to enjoy the blessings he has; but at various times various blasts of the soaring winds prevail; for the bliss of man lasts not long when, being of exceeding greatness, it descends with all its weight. Moderate shall I be in moderate fortune, great in great; I will always honour in my heart the fortune that attends me, suiting my temper to it according to my utmost ability."[1] Again, speaking of the victors in the games, he says: "May fortune attend them so that even in after days splendid wealth may bloom to them, and having obtained of the things that are held delightful in Greece no small share, may they not meet with envious reverses from the gods; may the deity be propitious to them in heart."[2] The bright recompense of virtue awaits man in the future life; but even there the crowning felicities are reserved for the elect of a great race, for Pindar is always a consistent aristocrat in his social and religious theories. Like Pascal, he seems to say to man. "Exalt thyself, I humble thee; humble thyself, I lift thee up," for after laying man's pride low in the dust before the majesty of Zeus, he recognises him as a brother of the gods.

He says:—"One is the race of men, another is the race of gods, but from one mother we both draw our breath; but a capacity altogether different separates *the races of men and gods*, since the one is nought, whilst the brazen heaven remaineth ever a firm seat for the other. But still in some respect do we resemble the immortals, either in mighty mind or in bodily frame, though we know not to what goal of life either by day or night fate has written for us to run."[3]

[1] Pythian Odes, iii. 141—149, 183—194. [2] Ibid., x. 26—34.
[3] Nemean Odes, vi. 1—13.

Woe to him who forgets this distance between mortals and immortals. Achilles himself for having thus erred more or less, was only admitted into the abode of the blessed through the intercession of Thetis. His exploits eclipsed his misdemeanours.

Pindar insists strongly, as we have said, upon the humble submission which is the duty of man in relation to the gods. Their secrets cannot be fathomed by man's thought.[1] Virtue alone secures their favours, and it is to them man owes all that is best in his virtue.[2] Virtue is transmitted by heredity, but it must nevertheless be confirmed in actual life.[3] The essential thing for man is to recognise the frailty of his nature and to abide within its limits. "Seek not to become Zeus,"[4] is the charge addressed to him, and it is equivalent to saying, "Seek not to supplant Zeus in his sovereignty." "A mortal lot befitteth mortals."[5] Thus the jealousy of the gods comes to be confounded with their justice. The human morality of Pindar is defaced undoubtedly by some of the blemishes of his time, but on the whole he maintains a very high standard. Humility in relation to the gods, is not to prevent daring. Courage is the condition of victory, but the great thing is justice; happiness that is not based on justice cannot continue. Pindar does not go so far as to enjoin the forgiveness of injuries, but he asks that justice be tempered by pity. "Touch a wound," he says, "with a light hand." Temperance, patience, and fairness are enjoined.

This morality finds partial sanction in a sufficiently vague metempsychosis. In his second Olympian ode, Pindar says :—

> "The happy mortal who these treasures shares,
> Well knows what Fate attends his gen'rous cares,
> Knows, that beyond the verge of life and light,
> In the sad regions of infernal night,
> The fierce, impracticable, churlish mind
> Avenging gods and penal woes shall find,
> Where strict inquiring justice shall bewray
> The crimes committed in the realms of day.

[1] Bergk, "Fragments," 39.
[2] Ibid., 51.
[3] Isthmian Odes, i.
[4] Ζεῦς γένεσθαι, Ibid., iv.
[5] Ibid., iv.

The impartial judge the rigid law declares,
No more to be revers'd by penitence or prayers.
But in the happy fields of light
Where Phœbus with an equal ray
Illuminates the balmy night
And gilds the cloudless day,
In peaceful unmolested joy,
The good their smiling hours employ.
Them no uneasy wants constrain
To vex th' ungrateful soil,
To tempt the dangers of the billowy main,
And break their strength with unabating toil,
A frail, disastrous being, to maintain;
But in their joyous calm abodes,
The recompense of justice they receive,
And in the fellowship of gods
Without a tear eternal ages live.
While banished by the Fates from joy and rest,
Intolerable woes the impious soul infest."[1]

It is clear that Pindar combined the Pythagorean idea of the transmigration of souls with a firm belief in the sanctions of the future. His brilliant imagination delighted in depicting the mild splendour of the fortunate isles where blow the refreshing breezes of ocean, which are adorned with the glory of an everlasting spring, while their righteous inhabitants celebrate the great Blessed One in songs of praise.

"But they who in true virtue strong,
The third purgation can endure;
And keep their minds from fraudful wrong
And guilt's contagion pure;
They through the starry paths of Jove
To Saturn's blissful seat remove,
Where fragrant breezes, vernal airs,
Sweet children of the main,
Purge the blest island from corroding cares,
And fan the bosom of each verdant plain:
Whose fertile soil immortal fruitage bears;
Trees, from whose flowering branches flow,
Arrayed in golden bloom, refulgent beams;
And flowers of golden hue, that blow
On the fresh borders of their parent streams.
These, by the blest, in solemn triumph worn,
Their unpolluted hands and clustering locks adorn."[2]

[1] Pindar, Olympian Odes, 104—122. [2] Ibid. 123—135

Pindar holds as strongly as any the solidarity which binds one generation to another in a common glory or shame, but as he admits restoration and purification beyond the grave, he does not impeach the eternal justice.

There can be no doubt that Pindar largely derived his exalted conceptions of the future life, from the remarkable movement which gave birth to the Orphic theology and to the mysteries of Eleusis.

These great mysteries were specially designed to take away the fear of death, and to give peace to the troubled conscience.[1] The testimony of ancient authors is very positive on this point. "These mysteries," says Isocrates in his Panegyric, "assure to those who are admitted to them, the sweetest hopes, not only for the close of this life, but also for all time."[2] Cicero says with regard to them; "We have not only found in them the means of living with joy, but also of dying with a better hope in death."[3]

If these mysteries are connected with Ceres and Proserpine, it is for deep reasons which come out in the famous Homeric hymn to Demeter, which contains the sacred legend dramatically represented at Eleusis. Ceres went everywhere seeking her daughter Proserpine, carried off by Pluto. She came to Eleusis, worn out with fatigue and disguised as an old woman. Received by the daughter of King Celeus, and diverted for a moment by the coarse jokes of Iambe the slave of Metanira, Celeus' wife, she devoted herself to the education of Triptolemus, the son of Celeus, and placed him in the fire in order to destroy his mortal parts. His mother Metanira screamed out at the sight and the spell was broken. Her son could not be a god, only a hero, benefactor of his country. Such was the declaration of the goddess, who suddenly revealed herself, and to whom a temple was dedicated at Eleusis. Furious at not finding her daughter, she smote the earth with sterility, and in spite of the supplications

[1] See Preller, vol. i. p. 626, *et seq.*, "Mémoires sur les mystères de Cérés et de Proserpine," *M. Guignaut*, 1856. See also the chapter on the "Mysteries," in M. Maury, "Histoire des religions de la Grèce," vol. ii.

[2] Isocrates, Panegyric, c. vi.

[3] Neque solum cum lætitia vivendi sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi,

of Jupiter and the Olympic gods, her wrath was not appeased till Pluto consented to restore her child to her for nine months of the year.

The mysteries of Eleusis, which began with a series of purifications known as the Lesser Mysteries in distinction from the Greater, were a sort of dramatic representation of the legend of Ceres. They took place in autumn and spring. In autumn, they probably represented symbolically the wanderings of Ceres in search of Proserpine; in spring they represented the happy moment when she regained her child. The supreme initiation was the last and most solemn act of this religious drama. The initiate or *epoptæ* suddenly saw the image of the goddess brilliantly illuminated, appear in the midst of the darkness, and around her, the gods, represented by the priests. In order to understand the meaning of these mysteries, it must be remembered that Ceres and Proserpine were old Telluric gods. The former represented the earth, and the latter the grain of wheat. Just as the seed goes down in winter into the heart of the earth, to germinate and reappear in the spring, so Proserpine goes down for three months into the abode of Hades. The mysteries of Eleusis were then originally, agricultural festivals, but their elaborate symbolism had a much wider scope. Proserpine, reigning in Hades, appeared as a tutelary goddess to those who had to descend thither after her. Her return to the light was a prophecy of immortality. Man also, like the grain of wheat, must die to live again. Lastly, the wanderings of Ceres represented the wanderings of the soul which has lost the right path, but finds it again after going far about. Two great ideas are embodied in these obscure symbols—the expiation of sin, and immortality. The purifications were designed to effect the desired salvation. The great goddesses alone had power to restore souls to their primitive purity. The deep and wise saying of an unknown author admirably expresses this identification of the mysteries of Eleusis, with preparation for the future life: "To die," he says, "is to be initiated."[1]

[1] Stobée, "Anthologie," cxx. p. 181.

The effect of these mysteries was to render religion more popular. The best inheritance in the future life was no longer reserved for heroes alone. Initiation established a sort of moral equality, which minimised differences of culture and descent. This was not the least of its benefits. As the mysteries of Eleusis opened to all the gate of the abode of the blessed, the ill-starred portion of mankind resorted to them to find compensation for the inequalities of the earthly life.

The under-world had other terrors beside the penalties of eternal justice. From its dark depths came forth those terrible divinities, the personification of the avenging consciousness of crime, who were called the Erinnyes or the Furies. At their head was the implacable Nemesis. They did not wait till the guilty soul descended into Tartarus, they laid hold of it even upon earth, filled it with terror, urged it on with an invisible goad, and overwhelmed it with remorse. The great departed heroes also kept watch and ward over their kindred, protecting the good, and pursuing with their wrath those who committed any crime.[1] Their malediction was a sort of domestic Fury, bringing misfortune upon their house if it was defiled. Thus the worship of the Chthonian gods with their gloomy train, developed at once hope and fear, deepening that sense of the need of expiation which had already sought satisfaction in the worship of Apollo.

The consciousness of a great unsatisfied need, was significantly manifested in a new development of the worship of Dionysus or Bacchus. This transformation of the mysteries of Eleusis, which wrought so powerfully on the Greek conscience, was not effected by a spontaneous effort of the religious feeling. It exhibits very clearly the influence of a movement at once philosophical and mystical, which was in part determined by contact with Oriental pantheism whether Phrygian or Egyptian. This theosophy, so strongly marked in the system of Pythagoras and of his master Pherecydes, gave rise at the close of the sixth century, to a brotherhood at once philosophical and religious, which exercised a most power-

[1] Decharmes, p. 396. Preller, vol. i. p. 622.

ful influence over the mind of Greece, and ultimately, when it became less absorbed in metaphysical abstractions, led to the transformation of the mysteries of Eleusis.

It is not any part of our design to enquire into the obscure beginnings of this brotherhood, known as the Orphic Society, because they claimed to be followers of Orpheus, the marvellous singer of Thessaly, who had gone down into Hades in search of his wife Eurydice. It is this aspect of the legend of Orpheus which connects him with the Chthonian divinities. The initiators of this strange movement, attached the name of Orpheus to the obscure hymns in which they formulated their doctrine, which was, in reality, only a reconstruction of the Theogony of Hesiod in a pantheistic sense.[1] Saturn was not to these Orphic theologers as to Hesiod, the blind force of Nature, not yet brought under control. On the contrary, they made Chronos the greatest of the gods. In him they saw the principle of harmony and order, evolving these at will. Before Chronos was manifested, Chaos and Æther, the most ancient gods, had produced the cosmic egg, the two halves of which, being separated, formed the heaven and the earth—Uranus and Gæa. From this egg came forth Chronos, the principle of order and harmony which exist virtually in him. He is afterwards called Eros, the god of love, controlling the affinities of life and making it fruitful. In the system of the Orphics he bears the name of Phanes. Through all these evolutions, we trace the same soul of the world living again in all the gods, beginning with Zeus, and finding its highest personification in Dionysus or Bacchus. This is no longer the Bacchus of Homeric mythology, but a new Bacchus, the son of Proserpine, and connected therefore with the under-world. In his destiny we have the very image of the transformation of universal life through death. The Orphic Dionysus was torn in pieces by the Titans almost as soon as he began to live. His palpitating heart was carried to Zeus by Minerva. Zeus, by devouring it, preserved the substance of the god from destruction. Dionysus came forth again to a glorious life, and thus became the

[1] See Maury, vol. ii. c. 1; Jules Girard, c. iii. iv.

symbol of the purification of all living beings. As a matter of fact, he is not to be distinguished from the other gods. He is the immortal soul of the world, and only passes through death to attain to the fullest development of being. Man is born of the ashes of the Titans, with which a particle of the substance of Dionysus had become blended at the time of his sacrifice. Thus man contains an admixture of good and evil, of lawless material life and of spiritual life, from which results his twofold nature. His first duty is to seek by means of asceticism, to secure the predominance of the soul over the body, and to aim at a higher and higher state of purity in the present life. After death, he is to be still further purified by successive transmigrations, till he is fitted for union with the soul of the world.

From a metaphysical point of view, the thought runnnig through all these strange fantasies, is the same as that of Oriental pantheism, in which the gods lose all individuality and are simply absorbed in the hidden principle of all things.

In the Orphic hymns which have come down to us, each god becomes in turn the universal god. Zeus-Uranus is proclaimed the generator of all things, the source and end of all, the universal father.[1] The sun "which runs its round in the whirlwind of an endless motion, an ever-revolving circle of fire," is also declared to be master of the Cosmos. Chronos again is worshipped as the generator of all things;[2] while it is said of Hera, that she communicates herself to all, and breathes into all the breath of life, so that she also is proclaimed the sovereign deity.[3] Gæa, the earth, might again dispute pre-eminence with Hera, for it is she who sustains life and is the giver of all things. She is the virgin of countless metamorphoses, the upholder of the immortal Cosmos, with full and ample bosom, rejoicing in the soft breath of plants, adorned with countless flowers. Around her revolves the moving world of stars and eternal nature.[4]

[1] Orphic Hymns, 15.
[2] Ibid., 7.
[3] Ibid., 15.
[4] Ibid., 25.

This eternal nature is indeed the true and universal deity, as appears from the fine hymn:—

"O Nature, queen-mother of all things, mother inexhaustible, venerable, creative, who controllest all, the glorious, invincible one, the first-born who destroyest all things, who bringest light, who upholdest all by thy strength, who goest ever onward, light of foot, chaste queen of the gods, end without an end, the common mother of all, born of thyself, who knowest all and art in all, in earth and air and sea; thou art implacable to the wicked, but gentle to the good. Universal queen! Blessed one from whom proceed all things in their beginning and their end—father and mother of all things; thou who art ever working, ever revolving on the wings of the wind; O thou eternal, immortal life, that dost manifest thyself eternally in new forms, the providence to whom all things belong, and who alone art the maker of all things, I pray thee give me peace."[1]

Such language is truly Oriental and carries us far away from the Olympic gods, the true representatives of heroic humanity. But it was just because those gods came too near to man, and resembled him too closely, that the deep and subtle thinkers who founded the Orphic school, fell back upon great mother-nature, and prostrated themselves before the soul of the world, which appeared to them far greater than the passionate and capricious gods of Olympus. The ideal evolved for them by great art and great poetry did not suffice. They preferred to bow before the grand, infinite, incomprehensible god whom they discerned beneath the veil of outward things.

We must not fail to observe however, that their pantheism was permeated by a high morality, and that while deifying nature, they aspired to purify themselves from the lower elements they derived from it. That which impressed them most strongly was the power of nature to work transformations through that which appeared to be destruction. Dionysus, their favourite deity, was the glorious and pathetic symbol of the better life attained beyond and by means of death. It was through him

[1] Orphic Hymns, 9.

and through him only, that the Orphic doctrines exerted an influence over the national religion. This religion allowed its followers to adhere to their metaphysical pantheism, but it gave a place of honour in its mysteries to their most venerated god, on account of his points of affinity with the great goddesses of Eleusis. This affinity comes out very prominently in the Orphic hymns. The Proserpine whom they celebrate, is clearly the Demeter of the Eleusinian mysteries, to whom belonged the sacred rites of initiation into the secrets of immortality. "Revered spouse of Pluto," we read in the hymn addressed to her, "thou who holdest the gates of Hades, mother of the Erinnyes, queen of the regions below; virgin who makest the fruits to grow, manifesting or concealing thy sacred body, thou in whom is the life and death of men, who dost sustain and destroy all things as it pleases thee, grant us a happy life till we come where thou reignest, O queen, with Pluto the terrible."[1]

In another hymn Dionysus or Bacchus, the roaring bull-faced Bacchus, crowned with ivy, clothed in a garment of leaves and bearing huge bunches of grapes, the great warrior of nature, is called the counsellor of Zeus and Proserpine.[2] In a hymn to the Eleusinian Demeter who inhabits the sacred groves of Eleusis, and clothes the ground with vegetation, this great goddess is called the companion of Dionysus.[3] Elsewhere the militant character of the young god is celebrated with enthusiasm. It is he, the god of a thousand names, who conquers all, who rejoices in the sword and bloodshed, who roars in his strength, the god who grasps the thyrsus and bounding with delight, gives happiness to all.[4]

The worship of Dionysus only intensified that thirst for immortality and purification, which led to the exaltation of the Delphic Apollo, and afterwards inspired the mysteries of Ceres and Proserpine. The Greek mind did for the new god, what it had done for the Chthonian divinities. Starting with a purely

[1] Orphic Hymn, 28.
[2] Ibid., 29.
[3] Ibid., 38.
[4] Ibid., 42.

naturalistic conception, it evolved from it a sublime symbolism. We have seen that Proserpine (after first representing by her descent into Hades and return to the light, the grain of corn which only disappears in the earth under the dark mantle of winter, to come forth again as a golden sheaf in harvest) becomes in the end the symbol of the Divine life into which man enters through death. The myth of Bacchus is expanded so as to contain the same glorious promise. Can there be anything more unpromising in appearance than the branch of the vine in the sunless months of winter? This dry branch, which represents the body of the god from whom we derive the elixir of life, is the very image of death. And yet, in autumn, that same seemingly sapless branch will be again heavy with the purple fruit which makes glad the heart of man. Man sees his own destiny fitly imaged forth in the life of nature. Dionysus, the god who dies to live again, enacts before him his own history, like the great goddesses of the lower world, with whom he is brought into ever closer relations through the legend of the mysteries. He becomes the son of Zeus and Proserpine, and sometimes of Semele also, whom he goes to seek in the dark realms of Hades, like Ceres in pursuit of her well beloved daughter. He also comes forth victorious from his perilous passage, and associates man with him in his deliverance.[1]

But the story of Dionysus is more than a mere series of legendary events. He, like Apollo, has to pass through a painful and purifying ordeal. His temporary death is the passion of a god. It no longer represents merely his seeming death as a cosmic force under the icy spell of the winter frosts. The whole earth becomes the theatre of his conflicts with countless foes. Even after his divine body comes forth from the tomb, where he was laid by the Titans, and he has recovered his pristine, beauty, he still has a perpetual battle to fight. It is only after terrible conflicts that he comes back in triumph from the far regions of India. This triumph is an ecstasy of life and joy which the Bacchæ, his priestesses, express in

[1] Preller, i. p. 844, *et seq.*; Decharme, B. III. c. v.

rapture described by Euripides in the following exuberant verses:—

"See the Bacchant is rushing;
From the top of his wand he is holding
The far-flaming torch of the pine;
And running he stirs up his wandering bands,
And rouses their heart by his shout.
Dainty the curls which he shakes in the breeze,
Then high o'er the gladness is heard the dread voice:—
'Ho, hither! ye Bacchæ
Ho! hither! ye Bacchæ!
Ye darlings of Tmolus, the giver of gold.
Come laud Dionysus
With deep sounding cymbals;
Come pour forth your hearts to the Evian god,
In the song and the shout of your Phrygian home;
Where'er the sweet-voiced flute shall summon you
Holy, to holy sport, for ye are now
Wanderers along the endless range of hills,
Joy only comes, as the filly in springtime,
Close by her dam as she feeds in the meadow,
Wantonly skipping; come Bacchæ to me.'"[1]

This popular and joyous aspect of the worship of Bacchus had no place in the mysteries in which he is the most prominent figure. Euripides gives a no less admirable rendering in these same Bacchanals, of the truly religious aspect of the worship of Bacchus.

"He who without grudging offers, as a mortal ever must,
Due observance to the godhead,
Ever liveth undismayed.
I will gladly search for wisdom,
If the search be not in malice; but this cannot satisfy,
Other holy things I reverence,
Which the livelong day may guide me into stedfast purity;
To the gods due honour giving, all unhallowed rites I spurn."[2]

And again

"Many the forms in which God is made manifest,
Often he orders what seems unexpected,
Much men resolve on remains uneffected,

[1] Euripides, The Bacchæ, 145—169, Thorold Rogers' Trans.
[2] The Bacchæ, 1002—1010.

Much men cannot do, God finds a way for;
Such is the meaning of what ye see."[1]

Under the name of Iacchus, the god who suffered and conquered appears side by side with the Chthonian[2] goddesses. In the Eleusinian mysteries, it is he who himself leads the procession of the initiate. They supposed that they became sharers in his immortality by eating in a sort of mythological Eucharist, the raw flesh of the bull, which was his representative.

M. Girard well says: "Thus a close communication is set up between men and a god, who himself suffers and enjoys with an intensity of feeling in which he makes them sharers. In this way their imagination is excited, and they become the subjects of an intense dramatic emotion which imparts a moral value to the facts of the legend. The passion of Bacchus is no longer distinguished from the sufferings of humanity. It is the symbol of them, and the outbursts of sorrow which it calls forth among his worshippers, and the transport of joy over his triumphant resurrection, are both alike natural expressions of feeling, under the pressure of a religious or poetic illusion."[3]

Thus by its incomparable power of assimilation, does the Greek genius evolve from Oriental pantheism, which had begun to creep in upon it through the Orphic gnosticism, a broader and more living humanism. It rises higher still in the sublime dramatic poetry connected with the worship of Bacchus. It originated in the dithyramb, a sort of sacred hymn, intended to represent the conflicts and victories of the god. Its chief merit, from a religious point of view, is that it popularised the beneficial influence of the mysteries of Eleusis, setting aside all that was esoteric merely, and fixing attention on their moral aspect.

[1] The Bacchæ, 1388—1392.

[2] Parmenides recognised the close connection between Bacchus and the Chthonian goddesses in these words: *αὐτὸς δὲ Ἀϊδης καὶ Διόνυσος*, (Zeller, "History of Philosophy," i. p. 184). Under the name of Dionysus Zagreus, the image of the life-giving principle in Nature, Bacchus has often been placed in the first rank of gods, higher even than the great goddesses, but, under this form, the myth concerning him is chiefly metaphysical, and thus ceases to affect the feelings.

[3] Jules Girard, p. 205.

§ IV.—Development of the Greek Conscience in the Great Tragedies.[1]

Humanism reached its highest development in the great tragic poets. These set forth in immortal types, and under the most pathetic forms, all the sacred sorrows of the conscience and all its lofty hopes, tempering its dread of eternal justice by intuitions of the divine pity yearning to restore. Never upon pagan soil did the moral law shine with a lustre at once so pure and terrible. Never was the divine idea invested with such sanctity. Never were the need and the hope of expiation expressed in nobler lyric strains, or in dramatic creations so grand and life-like. Greek tragedy is the very drama of human destiny, with its mysteries, conflicts, crimes, terrors, and with its inspired intuition of a deliverance equal to its need. It sets before us in a drama of blood and tears, the story of a race upon which presses the incubus of a strange curse, binding the generations together in an indefeasible solidarity, and urging them on through the darkness into the sure light beyond. We have seen how powerfully the lyric poetry, from Hesiod to Pindar, rendered the sad and sombre aspects of human existence. Pindar, dazzled as he was with the heroic glories of his nation, yet perceived that beneath this bright exterior, lay weakness, vacillation, sorrow. Empedocles, the poet-philosopher, sees in man a god fallen through the influence of discord, and through the violation of the law of Nature, which is a law of love. "It is an ancient decree of the gods," he says, "that when a mortal destined to a long life, has defiled his body through the sin of his soul, he must wander far from the blessed for thrice ten thousand years, and must inhabit again in succession all sorts of mortal forms. I myself am now one of those exiles who roam afar from God, for having been a party to contumacy and discord."[2]

An unknown Orphic poet describes this tragic destiny

[1] In addition to the works already indicated, we may mention M. Patin's book on the Greek Tragedies. "Les deux masques," by Paul de St. Victor, is full of enthusiasm for this noble poetry, and catches its true spirit. Paris, 1881, vol. ii.

[2] Plutarch, "De Exilio," 17.

of mankind, with as much beauty as depth, when he says to the mysterious Phanes, whom the Orphic poets regarded as the organic principle of the world: "Thy tears are the hapless race of men; by thy laugh thou hast raised up the sacred race of the gods."[1]

This deep and melancholy view of human destiny constantly recurs in the two great tragic poets of Athens, Æschylus and Sophocles. Through all the misfortunes of their heroes, we discern a yet deeper and vaster calamity which prompts the lament: "O hapless race of men!" No misfortune comes alone or is simply accidental. It is the result of a long past, and comes of some ancient curse, which has already lighted upon the ancestors of this same family, upon which the dread strokes of fate now fall in the presence of the spectator. The Chorus is there to make clear the deep meaning of that which transpires. This concatenation of ills is most forcibly brought out in the trilogy of Æschylus on the family of Agamemnon. The first link in the long unbroken chain of crime and catastrophe, is the unnatural sin of Thyestes, the father of the race.

A fatality pursues the Atrides, even after the most brilliant successes, such as the return of Agamemnon, announced by the luminous chain of signals which the night watcher perceives from the height of his tower, in the masterly scene with which the first part of the trilogy opens. This fatality is never a capricious decree of the gods, but a merited chastisement. It is so not only in the case of families, but of nations also. To this the smoking ruins of Troy bear witness, where rape and adultery have brought about defeat and destruction. The ancient city of Troy curses the ill-omened marriage of Paris, for from that fatal day its annals have been all of suffering. Æschylus thus describes the coming of Helen into the city of Ilion:—

> "Yea, once a lion's cub,
> A mischief in his house,
> As foster child one reared
> While still it loved the teats;

[1] Otfried Müller, "History of the Literature of Ancient Greece," p. 236.

In life's preluding dawn
Tame, by the children loved
And fondled by the old;
Oft in his arms 'twas held,
Like infant newly born,
With eyes that brightened to the hand that stroked
And fawning at the hest of hunger keen.
But when full grown, it showed
The nature of its sires;
For it unbidden made
A feast in recompense
Of all their fostering care,
By banquet of slain sheep,
With blood the house was stained;
A curse no slaves could bind,
Great mischief, murderous.
By God's decree, a priest of Atè thus
Was reared, and grew within the man's own house.
So I would tell that thus to Ilion came
Mood as of calm when all the air is still,
The gentle pride and joy of kingly state,
A tender glance of eye,
The full blown blossom of a passionate love,
Thrilling the very soul;
And yet she turned aside,
And wrought a bitter end of marriage feast,
Coming to Priam's race,
Ill-sojourner, ill-friend,
Sent by great Zeus, the god of host and guest,
Erinnys bride—bewailed."[1]

The curse which presses upon the human race is to be traced to the same cause as that which afflicts families and nations. The claims of eternal justice in view of outraged right are vigorously expressed in the manly poetry of Æschylus. The Chorus in Agamemnon says:—

"The spoiler shall be spoiled,
The slayer pay his debt;
Yea, while Zeus liveth through the ages, this
Lives also, that the doer bear his deed,
For this is heaven's decree.
Who now can drive from out the kingly house,
The brood of curses dark?
The house to Atè cleaves.[2]

[1] Æschylus, Agamemnon, v. 717—749.
[2] Ibid., v. 1562—1566.

Again :—

"I stand perplexed in soul, deprived of power
Of quick and ready thought,
Where now to turn, since thus,
Our home is falling low.
I fear the pelting storm
Of blood that shakes the basement of the house:
No more it rains in drops:
And for another deed of mischief dire,
Fate whets the righteous doom,
On other whetstones still."[1]

Recalling the crime of the father of the Atrides, Cassandra says :—

"Oh ills on ills,
Ah, woe is me! woe's me!
Again the dread pang of true prophet's gift,
With foretaste of great evil dizzies me.
See ye those children sitting on the house
In fashion like to phantom forms of dreams?
Infants who perished at their own kin's hands,
Their palms filled full with meat of their own flesh,
Loom on my sight, the heart and entrails bearing
(A sorry burden that!) on which of old
Their father fed. And in revenge for this.
I say a lion, dwelling in his lair
With not a spark of courage, stay-at-home
Plots 'gainst my master now he's home returned
And like a secret Atè will work out
With dire success; thus 'tis she plans; the male
Is murdered by the female."[2]

Again the chorus :—

"There lives an old saw framed in ancient days
In memories of men, that high estate
Full grown brings forth its young, nor childless dies,
But that from good success
Springs to the race a woe insatiable.
But I, apart from all,
Hold this my creed, alone;
For impious act it is that offspring breeds
Like to their parent stock:
For still in every house
That loves the right, their fate for evermore
Hath issue good and fair.
But Recklessness of old,
Is wont to breed another Recklessness,

[1] Agamemnon, v. 1530—1536. [2] Ibid., v. 1214—1232.

Sporting its youth in human miseries,
At once, or whensoe'er the fixed hour comes;
This young one, in its turn,
Begets Satiety
And Power that none can war with or resist,
Daring that Heaven defies:
Two curses dark within their dwelling place
Like those that gendered them.
But Justice shineth bright
In dwellings that are dark and dim with smoke,
And honours life law-ruled,
While gold-decked homes conjoined with hands defiled
She with averted eyes
Hath left, and draweth near
To holier things, nor worships might of wealth,
If counterfeit its praise;
But still directeth all the course of things
Towards its destined end."[1]

In the Choëphori the chorus says:—

"Grant ye from Zeus, O mighty Destinies!
That so our work may end
As Justice wills, who takes our side at last,
Now for the tongue of bitter hate let tongue
Of bitter hate be given. Loud and long
The voice of Justice claiming now her debt;
And for the murderous blow
Let him who slew with murderous blow repay.
'That the wrongdoer bear the wrong he did,'
Thrice ancient saying of a far-off time,
This speaketh as we speak."[2]

Again:—

"Stroke of vengeance swift
Smites some in life's clear day,
And for some tarrying long their sorrows wait
In twilight dim, on darkness' borderland,
And some the gloom of night,
Where nought is done, holds fast.
Because of blood that Mother Earth has drunk,
The guilt of slaughter that will vengeance work
Is fixed indelibly;
And Atè working grief,
Permits a while the guilty one to wait,
That so he may be full and overflow
With all-devouring ill.
No remedy avails for him whose touch
Comes on the bridal bed; and water-streams

[1] Agamemnon, v. 750—781. [2] Choëphori, v. 306—314.

Though all in common course
Should flow to cleanse the guilt
Of murder that,the sin-stained hand defiles,
Would yet flow all in vain
That guilt to purify."[1]

The sword which slays the body is not the most terrible weapon of eternal justice. That which transfixes the soul and fills it with terror is far more to be dreaded. The guilty man cannot escape the invisible sword of remorse. More to be dreaded than the Fates, are the gods from the dark realms of Tartarus who personify the terrors of conscience, the fierce Erinnyes, the avenging Furies who pursue the criminal as "the hound pursues a wounded fawn."[2] So they are described by Æschylus in the Eumenides. Their terrible chorus is sometimes led by the father of the guilty ones. Antigone exclaims:—

"Ah! thou hast touched the quick of all my grief,
The thrice-told tale of all my father's woe,
The fate which dogs us all;
The race of Labdacus of ancient fame,
Whence I myself have sprung, most miserable,
And now I go to them
To sojourn in the grave
Bound by a curse, unwed!"[3]

We see the Furies sent in pursuit of the unhappy Orestes who has killed his father, to avenge his mother. These terrible avengers sing over him the "hymn the Erinnyes love":—

"This chant of madness, frenzy-working,
A spell upon the soul, a lyreless strain
That withers up men's strength.
Such lot was then assigned us at our birth.
From us the Undying Ones must hold aloof:
Nor is there one who shares
The banquet meal with us;
In garments white I have no part nor lot;
My choice was made for overthrow of homes
Where home-bred slaughter works a loved one's death.
* * * * * *
Fixed is the law, no lack of means find we,
Our purpose never fails;

[1] Choëphori, v. 61—74.
[2] Eumenides, v. 246-7.
[3] Sophocles, Antigone, v. 857—869.

The dreaded Ones, the registrars of crime,
Whom mortals fail to soothe,
Fulfilling tasks dishonoured, unrevered,
Apart from all the gods,
In foul and sunless gloom.
Driving o'er rough steep road both those that see
And those whose eyes are closed." [1]

Overwhelmed by these chastisements and terrors, man turns to the gods, and first to great Zeus, the "true father of all," who is the sovereign of earth and heaven, the supreme dispenser of justice. In The Seven against Thebes the chorus of maidens says :—

"The gods
Have yet a mighty power, and oftentimes
In pressure of sore ill,
It raises one perplexed from direst woe,
When dark clouds gather thickly o'er his eyes."

But even the power of the gods cannot dry the burning tears of remorse or remove the stain of blood.

"When the hands of each
The other's blood have shed,
And the earth's dust shall drink
The black and clotted gore,
Who then can purify?
Who cleanse them from the guilt?"

And again in the Choëphori :—

"Because of blood that mother Earth has drunk,
The guilt of slaughter that will vengeance work
Is fixed indelibly;
And Atè, working grief,
Permits awhile the guilty one to wait
That so he may be full and overflow
With all-devouring ill."

In Agamemnon the Chorus asks :—

"Wilt thou,
When thou hast slain thy husband, mourn his death,
And for thy monstrous deeds
Do graceless grace?" [5]

* * * * * *

[1] Æschylus, Eumenides, v. 341—356, 381—388.
[2] The Seven against Thebes, v. 227—229.
[3] Ibid., v. 734—739.
[4] Choëphori, v. 66—69.
[5] Agamemnon, v. 1542—1546.

The mere invocation of the gods does not suffice. It is not enough that Orestes appeals to the great Jupiter, on behalf of the forsaken brood of the eagle which is no more, and implores him not to wither up the royal tree at the root. The expiation necessarily involved in the merited chastisement does not suffice. Recourse must be had to the merciful deities who bring peace to unhappy mortals. This idea of expiation is very prominent in the tragedies of Æschylus.

It need not seem strange that he does not openly attribute it to the Chthonian deities and to Bacchus, for this would be a betrayal of the mysteries. But it is beyond question that in his description of the deep, unsatisfied longing for expiation, he has come under the influence of the worship at Eleusis. He indeed makes direct allusion to it when he invokes Proserpine as the great goddess of the abode of the dead: "O Persephassa!" cries Electra, "goodly victory grant."[1]

It is easy to understand how Orestes casts himself upon the great purifying god of Delphi, in whose worship there was no mystery, upon that Apollo who had himself suffered for his own purification, and who was only a precursor of Iacchus. In the Greek tragedies, the religious feelings developed by the worship of Eleusis, all centre in the Delphic god, and he becomes a veritable redeemer. Orestes says:—

> "With this my bough and chaplet I will gain
> Earth's central shrine, the home where Loxias dwells,
> And the bright fire that is as deathless known,
> Seeking to scape this guilt of kindred blood.[2]

He comes to Athena as already purified at the shrine of Apollo. He says:—

> "O Queen Athena, I at Loxias' hest
> Am come; do thou receive me graciously,
> Sin-stained though I have been; no guilt of blood
> Is on my soul, nor is my hand unclean,
> But now with stain toned down and worn away:
> * * * * *

[1] Choëphori, v. 490.

[2] Ibid., v. 1034—1038.

I, taught by troubles, know full many a form
Of cleansing rites . . . .
For the blood fails and fades from off my hands;
The guilt of matricide is washed away.
For when 'twas fresh, it then was all dispelled
At Phœbos' shrine, by spells of slaughtered swine." [1]

The beneficent god lends him the shield of his protection. It is he who represents mercy in opposition to the implacable Eumenides, who will not abandon their prey, and complain that the pity of the new god overturns the palace of justice, the eternal order of things:

"Now will there be an outbreak of new laws:
If victory shall rest
Upon the wrong right of this matricide,
This deed will prompt forthwith
All mortal men to callous recklessness.
And many deaths, I trow,
At children's hands, their parents now await
Through all the time to come." [2]

Apollo carries the cause of Orestes before the Areopagus of Athens, and gains it, not only by exalting pardon above inflexible justice, but also by pointing out the difference between the murder committed by the adulterous wife, and the act of Orestes, the avenger of his father. As a shedder of blood, it was fitting that he should have had to submit to the rites of expiation, but the moral law, without wholly acquitting him, excuses him in the name of that true justice, which does not regard only the outward act. Strange that the human conscience, represented by the Areopagus of Athens, should thus have made itself heard in the final verdict. The old Erinnyes may change their name to the Eumenides, "*The well meaning*," after the acquittal of Orestes by the Areopagus, but they are none the less vanquished. A higher justice, justice blended with pardon has triumphed through the alliance of Apollo with Minerva, who

"Like a gardener shepherding his plants
Accepts this race of just men freed from ill." [3]

[1] Eumenides, v. 235—239; 276—283.
[2] Ibid., v. 490—498.
[3] Ibid., v. 871, 872.

The plays of Sophocles, who brought the Greek drama to its perfection, show the same inspiration. He also speaks of the eternal justice in godlike language and places the unwritten laws of conscience, "in which lives a god who grows not old," above the ephemeral legislation of the state. After showing in his Œdipus Tyrannus, the fatality of a destiny determined by the mysterious laws of solidarity, and bringing before us in the opening scenes of his Œdipus Coloneus, the innocent victim of a tragic fate, which had made the hero a criminal in spite of himself, he shows how he is greater in his blindness and poverty than he was upon his throne, greater in the dignity of his fatherhood and in the still higher dignity of a forgiven mortal, who no longer needs a guide as he enters the abode of the gods. A heavenly light illumines his darkened vision. The man who was yesterday an outcast banned, passes as a god into the invisible world, none barring his right of entrance. The messenger who brings the tidings of the death of Œdipus, describes his passage into this new light under the conduct of the Eleusinian gods. He says :—

"'Tis great and wonderful.
For how he went from hence, thou knowest well,
Thyself being present; no friend guiding him,
But he himself still led the way for all;
And when he neared the rough and steep descent
With brazen steps, deep rooted in the earth,
He stood on one of paths that intersect,
And then put off his garments, travel-stained.
And then he called his girls, and bade them fetch
Clear water from the stream and bring to him
For cleansing and libation. And they went
To where the corn is green upon the hill
Demeter calls her own, and quickly did
Their sire's behest; and then they bathed his limbs,
And clothed him in the garment that is meet.
And when he had his will in all they did,
And not one wish continued unfulfilled,
Zeus thundered from the darkness, and the girls
Heard it, and shuddering at their father's knees
Falling they wept. . . . . .
. . . . . So intertwined,
All wept and sobbed alike. And when they reached
The end of all their wailing, and the cry
No longer rose, there came a silence. Then

A voice from some one cried aloud to him,
And filled them all with fear, that made each hair
To stand on end. For many a time, the god
From many a quarter calls him: "Ho there!
Come, come, thou Œdipus; why stay we yet?
Long since thy footsteps linger on the way."
And he, when he perceived the God had called,
Bade Theseus come, the ruler of the land.

* * * * * *

And then with tears fast flowing, groaning still,
We followed with the maidens: going on
A little space we turned. And lo! we saw
The man no more; but he, the king, was there
Holding his hand to shade his eyes, as one
To whom there comes a vision drear and dread
He may not bear to look on. . . . So he died
No death to mourn for—did not leave the world,
Worn out with pain and sickness; but his end
If any ever was, was wonderful." [1]

Nothing grander has ever been written than this death of Œdipus. In Antigone, "made to love and not to hate," it is not only justice which triumphs, it is charity rendering good for evil, and ready to die rather than be untrue to itself. The young Greek girl who nevertheless can but regret the fair sunshine of her native land, and thus remains pure womanly in the midst of her self-sacrifice, gives us a foreshadowing of the yet higher and more tender Christian ideal. In the gentle virgin of Thebes we see humanism softened and purified. In Euripides it is passionate, pathetic, full of sublime impulses. He asks pity for the poor, justice for all. He desires that the good man shall live for his neighbour and not for himself alone. In such a life he will only be imitating the gods, who are the first to have compassion on poor humanity.[2] Euripides goes so far as to say that true nobleness is that of the soul; the wicked alone is vile, even though he be of higher descent than Jove himself. The slave is equal to the free man if he lives aright. These are however but flashes of divine truth; there is nothing corresponding to them in the social state of Athens. We cannot forget to what an extent Euripides really lowered the tone of religious feeling; how humanism

[1] Œdipus at Colonus, 1587—1667. [2] Stobée, "Anthologie," 612.

under his treatment, ceased to express the deepest yearning of the soul, and the deity became a mere *deus ex machinâ*. This deterioration was probably due to the influence of the Sophists.[1]

Aristophanes, the apostle and champion of the old traditions, riddled Euripides with his railleries. It is true that the daring libertinism in which the great comedian freely indulged in his marvellous verse, was little adapted to elevate the religious sentiment. And yet comedy, the pith of which is the contrast between the real and the ideal, between that which is and that which ought to be, does raise man above mere natural life which is governed by inexorable necessity. No one deems it strange that the lion should be cruel and the fox cunning, while in man vice and crime are satirised and branded as things which ought not to be.

We must come back to Æschylus in the grandest of his works, for the highest expression of the Greek conscience. Prometheus Bound sets before us a vivid picture of humanity and gives us a new and deeper insight into the meaning of man's destiny. It is a very superficial explanation of this great drama, to regard it as representing only the conflict between the last of the Titans and Jupiter. This Titan, the friend of man, is his elder brother, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. He has the same eager passionate heart, the same craving for independence. If he seeks to emancipate man, it is because he is conscious of the same nature in himself. In trying to make man the sharer of his kinghood, he has drawn him into his evil case. The fetters which gall him press as heavily upon man, ever hindered in doing what he wills to do. Is not man also the prey of the vulture which gnaws the vitals of Prometheus, so that the suffering cry of humanity is bitter as that which goes up from Mount Caucasus? Few things in the whole range of poetry are grander than the terrible imprecations of Prometheus:—

"Thou firmament of god, and swift-winged winds,
Ye springs of rivers, and of ocean waves

[1] M. Havet has some admirable remarks on Euripides, but he shows only his best side. His observations should be supplemented by those of Otfried Müller.

Thou smile innumerous! Mother of us all
O earth, and sun's all-seeing eye behold,
I pray, what I a God from Gods endure.
Behold in what foul case
I, for ten thousand years
Shall struggle in my woe,
In these unseemly chains.
Such doom the new-made Monarch of the Blest
Hath now devised for me.
Woe, woe! The present and the oncoming pang
I wail, as I search out
The place and hour when end of all these ills
Shall dawn on me at last.
What say I? All too clearly I foresee
The things that come, and nought of pain shall be
By me unlooked for; but I needs must bear
My destiny as best I may, knowing well
The might resistless of Necessity:
And neither may I speak of this my fate,
Nor hold my peace. For I, poor I, through giving
Great gifts to mortal men, am prisoner made
In these fast fetters; yea, in fennel stalk[1]
I watched the hidden spring of stolen fire
Which is to men a teacher of all arts,
Their chief resource. And now this penalty
Of that offence I pay, fast riveted
In chains beneath the open firmament.
* * * * *
The foe of Zeus, and held
In hatred by all Gods
Who tread the courts of Zeus;
And this for my great love,
Too great, for mortal men."[2]

It must not be supposed that Æschylus held Prometheus innocent in thus upbraiding the gods. This would have been contrary to the whole theodicy of his dramatic work. Jupiter is to him the god of light and of justice. The tragedy of Prometheus Bound in no degree contradicts this, as is clear from the homage paid to Zeus by the chorus of the Oceanides. They proclaim him the supreme arbiter of fate.

"What is Zeus' destiny but still to reign?"[3]

[1] The fennel or narthex seems to have been a large umbelliferous plant with a large stem filled with a sort of pith which was used when dry as tinder.

[2] Prometheus Bound, v. 88—123.

[3] Ibid., v. 519.

Æschylus does not justify therefore the defiant words against the God of Olympus, which Prometheus utters in his agony. It must not be forgotten that the paramount idea of Æschylus is that suffering always comes from wrong doing. If Prometheus is punished he must have deserved it. After being the ally of Jupiter in the war against the Titans, he had not the grace to bow before him. He sought to snatch that to which he had no right, and to raise himself to the dignity of a supreme god, which Pindar had already stigmatised as the greatest of crimes.

"What thou dost wish thou mutterest against Zeus,"

says the Chorus :—

"And must we think that Zeus shall serve another?"[1]

Prometheus is therefore punished as a rebel, and it is indeed with daring impiety that the human Titan utters his cry of revolt.

"I excepted, none dared cross his will,
But I did dare, and mortal men I freed
From passing, smitten down, to Hades' depths;
And therefore am I bound beneath these woes,
Dreadful to suffer, pitiable to see;
And I, who in my pity thought of men
More than myself, have not been worthy deemed
To gain like favour, but all ruthlessly
I thus am chained, foul shame this sight to Zeus."[2]

Again he says to Hermes :—

"I for my part, be sure, would never change
My evil state for that thy bond slave's lot.
* * * * *
Like one who soothes a wave, thy speech in vain,
Vexes my soul. But deem not thou that I
Fearing the will of Zeus, shall e'er become
As womanised in mind, or shall entreat
Him whom I greatly loathe, with upturned hand,
In woman's fashion, from these bonds of mine
To set me free. Far, far am I from that."[3]

Though thus rudely chastised by the offended god, Prometheus is still a noble rebel. We have seen how skilfully the poet brings out his true greatness and dignity.

[1] Prometheus Bound, v. 928—930. [2] Ibid., v. 234—241.
[3] Ibid., v. 966-7, 1001-6, 1023-27.

Hence deliverance awaits him in the future. There shall be reconciliation between this proud unhappy one and the great God of Olympus, who will once again become his ally, revealing to him the powerful aid, which is to make him victorious in the conflicts of the future through the younger god who shall assure to him his royalty without challenging it. In Prometheus Bound the Titan still blends defiance with his prophecies of coming good;[1] but there is every reason to believe that in the Prometheus Unbound, which is unhappily lost to us, the reconciliation was complete after the cruel expiation of Mount Caucasus. The pardon of Prometheus includes that of the whole race of man dragged down by him in his revolt. This interpretation of the great drama of Æschylus is truer to fact than that of Tertullian, who sees in Prometheus the Christ persecuted by the world, and exclaims in passionate indignation, "*Verus Prometheus blasphemiis laceratus!*" Prometheus is not the Christ. He is guilty man, enduring his punishment, but great even in his fall, the son of the god of heaven, whom the god of the future will restore. This young god, the deliverer of Prometheus, is engendered by Jupiter and is the perfect type of the hero at once divine and human. He is the Hercules, whose life was one long wrestling with the powers of evil. Did he not begin by strangling two serpents in his very cradle? Neither the Nemean lion, nor the Lernean hydra could resist his extraordinary strength, any more than the boar of Erymanthus, or the Centaurs—so many personifications of the brute forces of nature. His valour never failed in his twelve labours, which were in truth twelve terrible and successful battles. He thus passed triumphantly through the world, with the one exception of his twelve years of harsh servitude to Eurystheus. Thus he also had his passion, like Apollo and Bacchus.

It is obvious that the legend of Hercules, like all the other Greek myths, was at first largely charged with naturalistic elements which point to sun-worship, but these were soon cast aside. Hercules became the type of noble and dauntless heroism. Called to choose between the flowery

[1] Prometheus Bound, v. 907, *et seq.*

way of ease and the path of virtue, he decided for the latter. In many aspects he resembles both Apollo and Bacchus, for they also began with a militant life upon earth. Hercules however comes much nearer to humanity, and when he is carried up to heaven in a glorious apotheosis, it is humanity which is thus dignified to become the victorious ally of Jupiter.[1] In Hercules we have the supreme triumph of humanity, and we may may say also the last utterance of Hellenism. Hercules is not only a glorious hero; he is also a suffering hero, one who knows what it is to get weary and worn in the fight. It has been remarked that in the Farnese Hercules, there is a look of as much sadness as strength. Without this trait of suffering, he would not truly represent Greek humanism. We have seen how deeply this was imbued with moral seriousness, both in its great mysteries and in its noblest art creations.

We are thus brought to the close of the great religious evolution of Greece. We have yet to trace the development of philosophic speculation; then will come the era of universal fermentation, when the various religions all blend and to a great extent lose their distinctive character.

At the close of the age of Pericles, the religious sentiment in Greece reached the fullest development of which it was capable. Taking as its starting-point, the purified naturism of the Aryans, it rose gradually by following its own moral intuitions, to a very elevated conception of deity. Before this result was reached, it did indeed, as in the epics of Homer, bring its gods into all the *mêlée* of human passions, but even in this fanciful mythology it retained a measure of moral soundness. Too often the phenomenal in nature when vivified and dramatised, as it were, by anthropomorphism, becomes mere voluptuous legend; but humanism never allowed itself to be bound in these flowery chains of a lower symbolism. Conscience, which is the distinctive glory of man, lifted up its voice; and at its bidding, the gods appeared as the impersonation of that moral good which had presented itself to man as a pure ideal. Righteousness thus becomes the law of

[1] Preller, i. 257, *et seq.*; Décharme, Book IV. c. 2.

the world; punishment and remorse wait on the guilty. Man himself feels a mysterious sentence hanging over him, and trembles before the greatest of his gods. He casts a terrified glance into the dark abode of the dead. He asks the most sacred mysteries of his religion to enlighten the land of shades with a ray of hope, and at the same time he seeks an adequate expiation at the foot of the altars of Delphi, and in the strange ritual of the worship of Bacchus.

The high moral idea has flashed upon him in the midst of the clouds which rise from below and too often intercept his view; but having once seen the vision, he knows that he has failed to fulfil the law of his being, and an aspiration never to be quenched is awakened in his heart, after full deliverance from evil. The desire to attain to this will keep him in a state of constant unrest and will deepen his aspiration after the unknown God in whom all the prophetic intuitions of his soul are to be realised.

This higher development of the Greek conscience went on side by side with advancing civilisation and æsthetic culture. In all the creations of poetic genius and art which ennobled the public life of Greece, concern for the high and tragic destinies of man is no less marked than the worship of the beautiful. Thus art contributed largely to the development of the religious sentiment, and to its emancipation from the fetters of naturism.

It must be owned, however, that the absorbing devotion to art, so natural to a highly-endowed race like the Hellenes, was not altogether favourable to religion. The beautiful is apt to become divorced from the good and the true, when it is sought rather for the sake of the exquisite enjoyment it brings than as an inspiration to noble living. Sensuality is capable of dangerous refinements. The Venus of Paphos too often carried the day over the chaste virgin of the Parthenon, and the courtesan, who was her impure priestess, was only too ready to supplant the wife and mother in her own domain.

The tone of social life was thus lowered, and a false security took the place of the noble struggles for national independence. The citizen threw himself into the intrigues and often petty quarrels of the Agora.

After the noble Pericles, comes the brilliant Alcibiades, marvellously gifted, the bravest and most beautiful man of his day, with a giant intellect alike in philosophy and politics, yet in the end making all these great gifts subserve his own passions and interests, to the sacrifice of his country and his conscience. This ideal Greek was in truth the corrupter of his generation. The constant temptation of Greece was to forget, in the charmed contemplation of her own genius and beauty, the grand intuitions of conscience which had raised her so high in the scale of religion. We must carefully bear these antitheses in mind in the idea we form of her. She was neither wholly given up to graceful frivolity, as she is often represented, nor was she wholly absorbed in her divine ideal. She wavered between the two extremes. This enchantress, supposed to be ever gazing with serene smile at the beautiful, heard nevertheless the hymn of the avenging Furies, trembled before the majesty of an offended God, and sought with burning eagerness, atonement and reconciliation. This dualism in her moral life characterised her religion also; for highly as she exalted the human element, she yet never completely triumphed over naturism. Her gods were still nature-gods, for they only organised a world in which good and evil contended with what seemed equal powers. Of the God who is a spirit, independent alike of matter and of evil, they had no conception. Hence the great God of the Greeks is not free; he is himself under the yoke of a mysterious fatality which is nothing else than inexorable natural law. Naturism still envelopes humanism, like the Nessus-robe of Hercules, the god-like hero who still remains the highest personification of Hellenism. The son of Zeus is only freed from his torture on the funeral pyre, and so will it be also with the religion of the Hellenes. It must die in its turn, that it may rise into the full life of the spirit; but it will not die till it has sent forth a new and brilliant light into the darkness in which pagan humanity is groping after the true God.

CHAPTER III.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GREECE.[1]

§ I.—First Period of Greek Philosophy.

THE philosophy of a people is the highest and truest expression of its genius. Its thinkers evolve from their inner consciousness, the fundamental principles of the nation's life, apart from all that is merely accessory. Thus the Brahmans of India in their subtle metaphysics, brought out the logical results of the premisses contained in the national faith, and arrived at the doctrine of annihilation. The Greek philosophers fulfilled the same mission. They gave to the essential principles of Hellenic paganism, their exact formula.

Greece was well prepared to receive a philosophy which was not, as in India, the mere interpretation of an official creed. Owing to the lay character of her priesthood, Greece had indeed no uniform and universally acknowledged dogmatic system. The idiosyncrasies of the genius of Greece, her facile command of persuasive speech, the habit of reasoning about everything, the very nature of her language with its logical instinct, all favoured the development of philosophical thought. The ascendancy of humanism also gave a powerful impetus to the exercise of the reason as the distinctive and generalising

[1] Beside the writings of the Greek philosophers themselves, we refer the reader to *H. Ritter*, "History of Ancient Philosophy," translated by A. J. W. Morrison; *Ritter and Preller*, "Historia Philosophiæ Grecæ et Romanæ ex fontium locis contexta;" *E. Zeller*, "Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy," translated by S. F. Alleyne and S. Abbott.

See also E. Havet, "Le Christianisme et ses origines," and the monographs of French philosophers on the Greek philosophers mentioned.

faculty of man. The influence of the Orphic-Dionysiac mysteries, tended in the same direction. Lastly, the æsthetic tendency which is one of the most characteristic features of the Greeks, gave a primary application to this faculty of generalising and of disengaging the idea from the contingent fact; for the beautiful, being inseparable from the ideal, is after all, only the type, the essential idea, the ultimate end of things. It is easy to understand then, that philosophy was an autochthonous production, so to speak, of the Greek genius, and not a mere importation from without, although it is indisputable that in this domain, no less than in that of religion, the influence of the metaphysics of the East made itself felt through frequent contact.[1]

The philosophy of Greece did inestimable service in preparing the way for Christianity. In the first place, the persistent search after truth was in itself a grand and noble thing. This unquenchable desire of the soul of man to rise to its source, goes far to prove that that source is Divine. Greek philosophy did much to purify the idea of the deity, though the purification was never complete. The philosopher seemed indeed from time to time to climb the mount of spiritual vision, but he always fell back again under the influence of Oriental dualism. Nevertheless, such men as Socrates and Plato, fulfilled a truly sublime mission in their day and nation. They were the great prophets of the human conscience in the pagan world. That world awoke at their call, and this quickening of the moral sense was at once the glory and the death of philosophy under its systematic form; for conscience, once roused from its torpor, failed to find its full satisfaction in philosophy. It was soon constrained to abandon systems which were powerless to realise the moral ideal they had evoked. But to perish thus, and in such a cause, was high honour for any philosophy, and indeed it was only the system that ceased to be; all that was essentially true in it lived on, as the soul outlives the body when it returns to its dust. Thus the philosophy

[1] See Zeller, "Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy," pp. 18, *et seq.*

of Greece, was, like the Jewish law, though in an inferior sense, a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, as said Clement of Alexandria. It also had the shadow of good things to come. It awakened the desire after them, though it had them not to bestow.

There is obviously a close connection between the various philosophical systems. Logic reigns supreme in this domain of pure speculation, and herein lies both its strength and its weakness. Each system dies through that which is false and incomplete in it, and the doctrine which succeeds is the natural refutation of these errors, and either draws the true conclusions from the premisses already laid down, or puts a new principle in the place of one that is false. The great problem of ancient philosophy was how to get rid of the antinomy between mind and matter, for it has always been the province of speculation to bring into unity the conceptions of the mind of man. This then was the great crux of Greek philosophy, —the problem it never succeeded in solving. For its solution a higher light was needed. So long as the mind of man did not grasp the idea of a personal God, distinct from the world of creation, there were only three solutions open to explain the origin of things. Either the two terms of the problem must be placed in direct antagonism, the result being uncompromising dualism; or one of the terms must be suppressed, the result being either materialism or idealism; or lastly, resort must be had to the theory of emanation.

If all the philosophical systems made shipwreck on the same rock, they did not all do so in the same manner, and some among them, while in error on this capital point, yet blended such sublime truth with their errors, that in spite of them they exercised a highly beneficial influence. As we are concerned chiefly with the moral tendency of the various doctrines, and are persuaded that this does not depend entirely upon their metaphysical aspect, we shall be careful not to pronounce a summary condemnation on the whole philosophy of Greece. We shall gladly trace the purer current which flows through its often turbid waters, and becomes a living and lucid stream in the Platonic school. Platonism is indeed the system

most closely allied to Christianity, and did most to prepare men for its reception, except indeed those who were too easily satisfied with Platonism itself. It had also a considerable influence over the early development of Christian theology. We shall therefore speak of it separately in this rapid review of Greek philosophy.

We find in that philosophy, under a new form, the successive mythological creations of humanity. This is perfectly natural, for there is nothing arbitrary or accidental in the sequence of the religions of the ancient world. We have seen how they are all linked together by a chain of hidden but irresistible dialectics. Mankind is free not to engage in this or that course, but having once started in a certain intellectual direction, it is bound to pursue it to the end, unless some violent crisis intervenes. In the East naturism logically led to a dualism which became more and more marked, as dualism itself led to the pantheism of the Brahmans and the nihilism of the Buddhists. We have seen how the religion of Greece rose by degrees to its purer intuitions. Philosophic thought passed through an exactly similar evolution; only as reflection follows imagination and never precedes it, the philosophical development did not run parallel with the mythological. The periods of Greek philosophy do not coincide exactly with those of the history of religion. Thus naturism was already banished from the religious sphere, while it still held its place in the speculative, and humanism was not clearly formulated in the schools till long after it had been enthroned in the temples.

In its first period Greek philosophy is purely naturalistic, for it places the first principle of things in nature, or identifies it with one of the natural elements, or forces. In the second period it is different. Then philosophy, rising above nature, requires from the mind of man a comprehensive concept which shall explain the universe. It thus emphatically sets its seal on humanism, since it is in the reason of man that philosophy finds the key to the great enigma of being, of which man becomes the normal type. Man—the thinking reed—was thus triumphantly raised above nature, though a breath would lay him low in the dust. The superiority of mind over matter was

vindicated and yet, as we have repeatedly said, it was but a partial victory, for dualism still survived.

It was in Ionia, at the time when Solon was founding the Athenian democracy, that philosophy properly so called, made its first appearance in Hellenic civilisation with Thales the Milesian.[1] We can only slightly indicate the stages of this first evolution, which corresponds in the domain of philosophy to Oriental naturism under its first form in Chaldea. Thales declared water to be the matter from which all things arose and of which they consist.[2] He explains their evolution by the solidification of the humid element. Anaximander conceived the primitive substance to be air, the inspiration and expiration of which produced life in its various phases. Heracleitus likened it to fire, perpetually in motion. We must not suppose because Anaximander calls this first principle, "the unlimited," that he rises above naturism, for he is referring only to "the infinite mass of matter," out of which all things arise and by disintegration form the world.[3] Diogenes of Apollonia certainly tried to raise the Ionian school to a higher stage by recognising that the first principle must be endued with a "rational essence," but he did not really distinguish this "rational essence" from the air. "All things are merely transformations of air. Their transformation consists in rarefaction and condensation, or which is the same, in heating and cooling."[4]

It must be admitted that Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ got at least a glimpse of a higher explanation of the world than mere naturism. He indeed ascribes to mind (*νοῦς*) the power of organising the world. He does not however distinguish with sufficiently clearness the *νοῦς* from the world; he does not make it a personal and spiritual agent, so that in the end it becomes confounded with the powers of nature. Its action consists merely in

[1] Zeller peremptorily rejects the division of the Ionian School into two branches, adopted by Ritter: 1st, The dynamic branch, which evolves things from the forces of nature; 2nd, The mechanical branch, which admits action from without, and consequently the possibility of an *extra* or *super* natural element.

[2] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 38.

[3] Ibid., p. 39.

[4] Ibid., p. 44.

the combination of substances already existing; this is the genesis; their separation is decay.[1] In this recognition of the action of mind, however, there is undoubtedly an intuition, a presentiment of humanism; for from whence did Anaxagoras derive this notion of mind except from man, whom he regarded as the type of spiritual being? Incomplete as is the spiritualism of Anaxagoras, it entitles him to the magnificent homage paid to him by Aristotle, when he says that with him philosophy seems to awaken from a long delirium, by which he means no doubt that it broke through the spell of naturism. Thanks to Anaxagoras, the duality of nature and mind is to a certain extent formulated, and the contradiction between these two essential elements of things becomes an acknowledged premiss. From monistic naturalism, we pass on to dualism. This took shape in the Greek mind under the influence of Pythagoras, who seems to play in philosophy, the part of Orpheus in the Mysteries. The famous theory of numbers bears the evident impress of dualism. In fact, the primitive number from which all things are evolved, comprehends at once the material principle which is "the unlimitable and formless," and the spiritual principle which is the element of limitation and determination. Number, which is at once the essence and the type of all beings, results from the reciprocal action of these two elements. It is not simply the unlimited, nor simply the determining element; it is "that which makes the hidden cognisable, rules Divine things (the cosmos) and the works of men."[2] The laws of symmetry are strictly observed in this interpretation of matter and spirit; mathematical relations express the union of the spiritual and the material. The limited and unlimited, mind and matter, being both contained at first indistinctly in the great whole, are in the end eliminated from it to unite and form a harmonic number, of which heaven is the most perfect representation, while man reproduces it upon earth. The Pythagorean school was a school of mathematicians and astronomers. It seems to correspond very closely in the history of philosophy with the Zoroastrian school in Iran. In fact,

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 84. [2] Ibid., p. 50.

while the Ionian school (resembling in this the early religions of the East) recognised only one blind and confused principle, including in itself all paradoxes, the Pythagorean school—like the Avesta—acknowledged two distinct principles. By placing them in opposition it exerted, like the Persian school, a moral influence, for it enjoined man to give the ascendancy everywhere to the good, that is to harmony; but like the Persian school, also, it remained hopelessly entangled in the web of dualism. "Unity," says the Pythagorean school, "comes from duality."[1] It is the agreement of the discordant. The Pythagoreans differed from the Parsees however in this respect, that they identified the evil element with the physical life, and therefore cultivated an asceticism altogether foreign to the religion of Zoroaster.

We have seen that dualism, pushed to its extreme consequences, leads to nihilism. The human mind is incapable of long maintaining the equilibrium between the material and the spiritual principle. It soon tries to abolish one term or other of the great antithesis. As soon as the idea of unity is once grasped, the mind is ready to sacrifice everything to it. Diversity, movement, all forms of particular life, assume the appearance of an evil. This petty existence must be merged in the abyss of absolute and undivided existence. This tendency becomes Brahmanism in the mythological development of the East. In the philosophical evolution of Greece, it produces the Elean school. We know how daringly Xenophanes and Parmenides formulated the most extreme idealism. Parmenides says: "Only being is; non-being is not and cannot be thought. . . . Being cannot begin or cease to be, for it can neither come from non-being nor become non-being; it never *was* and never *will be*, but *is* undividedly present. It is indivisible, for it is that which is everywhere equally, and there is nothing by which it could be divided. It is unmoved, complete in itself, everywhere self-identical, and may be compared with a well-rounded sphere, spreading itself equally from the centre to all sides. Thought, moreover, is not distinct

[1] Τὸ δ' ἓν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων (Arist. Metaph. A., 1.).

from being, for it is thought of the existent. Only *that* knowledge therefore has truth, which shows us in all things this one invariable being, and this is reason (λόγος). The senses on the other hand, which show us a multiplicity of things, origin, decay and change, are the sources of all error." [1]

In an admirable passage in which Parmenides protests against the human form of the gods, and the unworthy stories about them related by Homer and Hesiod, he says of the one God, "He is neither comparable to mortals in shape, nor in thought," "all eye, all ear, all thought," "who without trouble, by his thought, governs all things." [2] A plurality of gods is incompatible with this purer conception of deity. But high as Parmenides thus placed his God, he yet did not think of him as possessing any true personality distinct from the universe. He had no conception of a God who is a spirit.

The God of Parmenides is not the God of life. He rather resembles a lifeless all-engulfing Brahma. Hence this philosophy tends rather to the annihilation of true being.

The Elean school directly taught annihilation; and the same conclusion was reached by another school, which seemed to start from a diametrically opposite point of view. Zeller shows how the Eleatics in "maintaining the unity and eternity of God and the universe," set aside all idea of any change to be wrought by the action of an inherent force. Heracleitus and the whole Atomistic school accepted this "impossibility of an *absolute* genesis or decay, but would not deny the plurality of things, motion, nor genesis and decay (*i.e.* of composite things)." [3] "Being," they said, "is that which fills space,—the Plenum; non-being is the Void." As they were not prepared to accept the multiplication of things as the result of an ulterior process, they were constrained to trace it back to the Plenum itself. This they conceived to be divided into innumerable atoms, which on account of their minuteness are not perceptible separately. They are separated from one another by the Void, but must them-

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 61. [2] Ibid., p. 59.
[3] Ibid., p. 77.

selves be indivisible, because they completely fill their space, and have no vacuum in them; for this reason they are called atoms (*ἄτομα*)."[1] All derivation or genesis of the composite consists in the coming together of separate atoms; and all decay in the separation of combined atoms; and similarly with all kinds of change. All operation of things on each other is a mechanical operation, through pressure and impact. Thus we have the infinite multiplication of atoms produced by a mere mechanical movement. In reality, the Atomistic school tended to nihilism no less than the Eleatic, for real life is as incompatible with a perpetual state of transition, without any persistence, as with total immobility—the hypothesis of the other school.

Heracleitus declares "that for the philosopher in search not of theories but of the true, all things are in constant flux; nothing has permanence."[2] He makes fire the primitive element, as being "the substance which least of all has a permanent consistency, or allows it in another. Things arise from fire through its transmutation into other substances, and in the same way they return to it again."[3] Thus the history of the world is to move in endless alternation between the state of divided being and that of the union of all things in the primitive fire. Everything is produced by contradiction.[4] Everything is born of discord.[5] If Heracleitus gives the name of Zeus to the acting force which impels to this eternal transmutation, it is a mere form of speech. As the world arose from the primitive fire, so it will return to primitive fire again by means of conflagration, in order to be again reconstituted from the same substance after a fixed time. "The soul of man is a part of this divine fire. The purer the fire the more perfect is the soul."[6] As this divine fire is imprisoned in the body, Heracleitus taught that our life is the death of the gods, and our death their life.[7]

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 78.
[2] Ibid., p. 67.
[3] Ibid., pp. 68, 69.
[4] Diog. Laertes., ix. 7.
[5] *πόλεμος πάντων πατήρ*, Hippolytus. "Philosoph.," ix. 9
[6] Zeller, p. 70.
[7] Hippolytus, "Philosoph.," ix. 10.

Empedocles eloquently set forth the pessimism which resulted from this nihilist doctrine of the Eleatics and of the Atomistic school. He recognised four primitive elements, or as he called them, "the roots of all." These are brought together or divided by a combining and a separating force, representing Love or Harmony, and Hate. Everything that exists, including man, is produced from elemental discord. "O unhappy race of mortals," he exclaims, "of what convulsions and throes are ye born!" This despairing tone is always the final utterance of naturism, as we have seen in the history of Buddhism.

Pessimism is not, however, its only issue; it may lead also to complete scepticism. This was one of its saddest results in Greece. Atomism was its worthy parent. We have shown that it regarded universal life as simply the combination of atoms in the Void, that is to say in space, all exerting a reciprocal action according to their nature and weight. Man is therefore nothing more than a fortuitous concourse of atoms from the terrestrial slime with the soul for a motive power. "The soul itself is something corporeal; it consists of fine smooth and round atoms, and therefore of fire which is distributed through the whole body, and by the process of inhalation is hindered from escaping, and is also replenished from the outer air; but the particular activities of the soul have their seat in particular organs."[1] Thus the higher world of spirit is entirely ignored. There is no more any first principle, no gods, no morality. All certainty vanishes. The Sophists arrived at this conclusion both from a metaphysical and a moral point of view, introducing into their arguments the fatal subtlety of Buddhist speculation. How characteristic in this respect is this argument, which Gorgias states with considerable acuteness: (1) "That nothing could exist; (2) that what did exist could not be known to us; (3) that that which was known could not be imparted to another."[2] In the same school we meet with the assertion that "no predicate can be given to a subject, because one thing cannot be many."[3] Again, for every person that is true and real which appears so to him,

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 80. [2] Ibid., p. 93.
[3] Ibid.

and for this reason there is only a subjective and relative, not an objective and universal truth.[1]

From a moral standpoint, the Sophists denied that there was any rule, saying that man is the measure of things,[2] and that moreover on all questions, two equally plausible replies are possible. It is easy to see how pernicious such an influence would be. It was the deathblow to philosophy, which is but child's play if it is not inspired by the love of truth, and to love truth it must be believed in. In making man the measure of all things, after depriving him of any moral and rational criterion, the Sophists substituted a false humanism for the true. As philosophy under these conditions was only a *jeu d'ésprit*, so eloquence was mere empty rhetoric. Attaching importance rather to the technicalities of language and exposition, than to the logical or actual correctness of the discussion, the Sophists became for the most part mere teachers of elocution, who composed introductions to the art, and pronounced and wrote pattern speeches, which they caused their pupils to learn by heart.[3] The only real service they did was the cultivation of the art of oratory, and the perfecting of the dialectic instrument, which in worthier hands was to do good service to the cause of sound philosophy. They also awakened an interest in psychology by turning the minds of men in upon themselves. It was imperative, however, that the youth of Athens should be withdrawn from an influence as stultifying to the intellect as corrupting to the heart. To do this was the immortal work of Socrates.[4]

§ II.—Second Period of Greek Philosophy.

If sophistry was the degradation of Greek humanism, the school of Socrates and his illustrious successors, Plato and Aristotle, was its glorious vindication. The new form of the scientific life founded by Socrates, consisted

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 93.
[2] πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος.
[3] See Zeller, pp. 97, 98.
[4] See the whole chapter on the Sophists in Zeller's "Outlines of Greek Philosophy." We are surprised at the favourable way in which Grote speaks of the Sophists.

in "demanding knowledge through concepts, in introducing men to the formation of concepts by dialectic, and in applying the process to ethical and kindred religious questions."[1]

In this philosophical development, we shall observe three successive stages. Socrates introduces us to general concepts, which explain the existence of things by that which is permanent and common to all, in distinction from the changing and accidental. Plato carried on the work of his master with a deeper and more comprehensive intelligence.

Aristotle supplemented Platonism by the most vigorous researches into nature.

As we are not writing a history of philosophy, we can but characterise these three great doctrines, all belonging really to the same school. In fact, there is properly speaking, no Socratic system. Plato and Aristotle alone give us a well arranged metaphysical system, but Socrates was no less their master. It was he who, as Cicero said, brought philosophy down from heaven to earth, that is to say, wrested it from a purely objective naturism, and established it on the domain of psychological facts, thus placing it on its true basis.[2]

As no one ever more truly lived what he taught than Socrates, it is as important for us to know his personal history as his doctrine, in order to understand the marvellous influence he exerted. The memory he left with his disciples, the affection mingled with respect which they ever cherished for his name, are sufficient evidence of his elevation of character and moral piety. He was indeed a Greek of Athens, and as such too much enthralled by pagan customs. But his life was none the less a noble life, and its beauty can only be tarnished by the aspersions of calumny, such as those cast upon him by Lucian, and unhappily by too many clumsy defenders of Christianity in later days, who seem to imagine that the Gospel is magnified by vilifying human nature.

[1] See Zeller on Socrates. "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 99, *et seq.*

[2] Apart from the great works of Socrates' contemporaries, see M. Fouillée's work, "La Philosophie de Socrate."

Born in humble life, and without any of those outward advantages which Greece was wont to prize so highly, Socrates showed himself a true ruler of men, and his power was all the more real for being so unostentatious. No one had a greater repugnance than he to the vulgar methods of producing an effect, such as pomp of circumstance and stilted speech. He gave his lessons in morals and philosophy in the free intercourse of friendship. He never spoke with authority. He preferred the tone of lively conversation, the playful bent of which he was ever ready to direct to the end he had in view. Without founding any school properly so called, he was ready at all times and in all places to teach—in the public square, the shop, the banqueting hall, or the prison.

The secret of his power was threefold—his affection for his disciples, his entire devotion to truth, and the agreement of his life with his doctrine. Xenophon says: "He expressed wonder that any one who professed to teach virtue should demand money, and not think that he gained the greatest profit in securing a good friend, but fear that he whom he had made an honourable and worthy character, would not retain the greatest gratitude towards his greatest benefactor."[1] Socrates, indeed, never expressed so much to any one; yet he believed that those of his associates who imbibed what he approved, would be always good friends, both to himself and to each other. In another passage, comparing wisdom to a fair virgin, he says: "Those who sell their wisdom for money, to any that will buy, men call Sophists, or, as it were, prostituters of wisdom; but whoever makes a friend of a person whom he knows to be deserving, by teaching him all the good that he knows, we consider him to act the part which becomes an honourable and good citizen."[2]

Again: "Socrates would often say that he loved some particular person; but he was evidently enamoured not of those formed by nature to be beautiful, but of those naturally inclined to virtue."[3] He esteemed true friendship

[1] Xenophon, "Memorab.," Book I. c. ii. § 7, 8.
[2] Ibid., Book I. c. vi. § 13.
[3] Ibid., Book IV. c. i. § 2.

above every earthly good ; and it is easy to understand how warmly his disciples responded to his affection, and enjoyed his society. They respected as much as they loved him, for it might truly be said of him, that "first he wrought and afterwards he taught." If he enjoined temperance and sobriety, he was himself a pattern of these virtues. Poorly clad, content with little, he despised all the luxuries of life. His courage never failed him. He was intrepid on the battle field, and still more intrepid in his office as magistrate, stedfastly resisting the capricious will of the people, when they clamoured for the unjust impeachment of ten generals. He was equally daring in breaking through the iniquitous injunctions of the thirty tyrants of Athens. The railleries of Aristophanes, who dragged his name into public ridicule, neither troubled nor angered him. He displayed the same indomitable firmness when he was betrayed before his judges and falsely accused of impiety. In his Apology he says: "If you say to me: 'Socrates, this time we will let you off, but upon one condition, that you are not to enquire and speculate in this way any more, and if you are caught doing this again, you shall die;' if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: 'Men of Athens, I honour and love you, but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength, I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy. . . . I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak after your manner and live.' For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say or do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness, for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence, condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they too go their

ways, condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fatal, and I think that they are well."[1]

The same faithfulness to duty led Socrates to refuse to escape from prison that "the decisions of the law might not be set aside or overthrown," for if "a man may do no violence to his father and mother, much less may he do violence to his country. If he is punished by her with imprisonment or stripes the punishment is to be endured in silence. . . . Leave me then to follow whithersoever God leads."

These words show the truly religious spirit of Socrates, that faith in the Deity which made him say that "God had given him to the Athenians," and that a god or goddess guided him in all things. There was no doubt superstition blended with truth in this belief, but who can doubt that there was something truly of God in such a life crowned by such a death?

The influence of Socrates on his disciples has been enthusiastically described by one of the most brilliant if not the most faithful of them. He says: "My heart leaps within me more than that of any Corybantian reveller, and my eyes rain tears when I hear him. And I observe that many others are affected in the same way. I have heard Pericles and other great orators, but though I thought that they spoke well, I never had any similar feeling; my soul was not stirred by them nor was I angry at the thought of my own slavish state. But Socrates has often brought me to such a pass, that I have felt as if I could hardly endure this life which I am leading, and I am conscious that if I did not shut my ears against him and fly from the voice of the siren, he would retain me until I grew old, sitting at his feet. For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my own soul, and busying myself with the concerns of the Athenians; therefore I hold my ears and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person who ever made me ashamed, which you might

[1] Dialogues of Plato. "Apology," 29D, 383—39B.

think not to be in my nature, and there is no one else who does the same. For I know that I cannot answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave his presence, the love of popularity gets the better of me. And therefore I run away and fly from him, and when I see him I am ashamed of what I have confessed to him. Many a time have I wished that he were dead, and yet I know that I should be more sorry than glad if he were to die; so that I am at my wits' end."[1]

If we turn to Socrates' own teaching we shall fail to apprehend either its form or substance, unless we realise the historic environment of the teacher. It is throughout a powerful protest against the dangerous sophistry which saps the basis of certainty both in mind and morals. Socrates took up and interpreted in his own fashion the saying of Protagoras, that man is the measure of all things; but the question is, what is man in himself? and is there not at the root of his being something stable, fixed, eternally true? Socrates emphatically affirms that there is. The man of Protagoras is the man of current opinion. But if we take deeper soundings, we shall find beneath these ebbing and flowing tides, the rock that cannot be shaken, that is to say the true knowledge which is of God. "The soul of man, partaking of the divine nature," is a prophetess, and it is of the first importance to arrive at a true knowledge of it and to "reverence what is divine."[2] Therefore Socrates attaches such great importance to the motto inscribed on the front of the temple of Delphi: "Know thyself." The *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* is intended to distinguish science based upon truth from mere opinion. In order to arrive at this, Socrates endeavours first to convince his questioners of their ignorance, while they are leaning on mere opinion; and by the use of his well-known skill and the fine irony of which he is a master, he gradually brings the most presumptuous to recognise that he knows nothing. But it is not enough for man to have proved his own ignorance,

[1] Dialogues of Plato. Trans. by B. Jowett, M.A. "Symposium," § 215, 216.

[2] Xenophon, "Memorab.," Book IV. c. iii. § 14. *Ἀλλὰ μὴν ἀνθρώπου γε ψυχὴ τοῦ θείου μετέχει.*

he must arrive at true knowledge, as the fixed idea which is capable of explaining things. This idea Socrates tries to evolve from its germ in man's inner consciousness. We are familiar with the figure in which he represents himself as the mental *accoucheur*. He has not to generate or to give birth to truth, but to facilitate its coming into the light.

His disciple Theætetus says: "I can assure you, Socrates, that I have tried very often when I heard the questions which came from you; but I can neither persuade myself that I have any answer to give, nor hear of any one who answers as you would have me answer; and I cannot get rid of the desire to answer.

Soc. These are the pangs of labour, my dear Theætetus; you have something within you which you are bringing to the birth.

Theæt. I do not know, Socrates; I only say what I feel.

Soc. And have you never heard, simpleton, that I am the son of a midwife, brave and burly, whose name was Phænarete?

Theæt. Yes, I have.

Soc. And that I myself practise midwifery?

Theæt. No,—never

Soc. Let me tell you that I do, my friend, only I practise on souls when they are in labour and not on bodies." [1]

There could hardly be a more explicit recognition of the fact that truth is in man. In "Phædo," he says: "I thought as I had failed in the contemplation of true existence, I ought to be careful that I did not lose the eye of my soul; as people may injure their bodily eye by observing and gazing on the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water, or in some similar medium. That occurred to me, and I was afraid that my soul might be blinded altogether if I looked at things with my eyes, or tried to apprehend them by the help of the senses. And I thought that I had better have recourse to the world of mind and seek there the truth of existence." [2]

[1] Dialogues of Plato, "Theætetus," § 148—150.
[2] Ibid., "Phædo," § 99.

Thus the Socratic method is closely allied to the doctrine, and is indeed inseparable from it. Socrates sometimes used definition as exact as possible, sometimes deduction and induction; and he thus created the dialectic method by which the general is distinguished from the particular, and classification becomes possible. We know what grand results his illustrious disciples achieved by his method.

If we look now at the Socratic doctrine itself, we shall observe that it is one steady protest against the prevailing sophistry. This false teaching had destroyed all certainty of truth or goodness, involving the moral law in the same doubt and confusion as scientific truth. Socrates seeks to re-establish the certainty of both; and in his anxiety to place them upon an irremovable basis, he binds them inseparably together. According to him, virtue and knowledge are absolutely identical; on this he repeatedly insists. "There is but one good," he says, "knowledge; and but one evil, ignorance."[1] The idea of good, once evolved from the human spirit, carries us back by the very fact of its existence, to a higher and anterior principle —to God Himself who possesses all in the highest degree. Must not the *cause* contain in an eminent and perfect degree, all that the *effect* contains? Zeus being the supreme cause, possesses a royal soul and intellect. "The divine nature is perfection, and to be nearest to the divine nature is to be nearest to perfection."[2]

The primordial Being then is the Good, but He is also the highest Truth. To know the good is to possess it. It cannot be known without being realised. If it is not realised it is not known. This identification of knowledge with virtue involves an intellectualism which is not without peril, and which leaves but little scope for free will, choice being only possible where knowledge governs the will. Socrates lost sight of the fact that if perfect liberty is to be realised in that right-doing which is the law of our nature, the good must be freely chosen or it loses its moral character. It would be very unjust, however, to accuse him of having sacrificed morals to metaphysics.

[1] Diog. Läert, ii. 109.
[2] Xenophon, "Memorab.," B. I. c. vi. §10.

On the contrary, his desire was so strong that metaphysical doubts should not be allowed to interfere with moral obligations, that it led him to identify virtue with knowledge. Knowledge with him is virtue, and virtue knowledge. There is no distinction in principle between the good and the true. There are not two laws, one for the mind and one for the will; there is only one law. The Sophists had raised the will of the individual to the height of a law; Socrates sought to bring this subjective law into subordination to the objective law of existence. He is still further saved from a sterile intellectualism by the importance which he attaches to the issues of life. Universal life tends to good by virtue of its eternal principle, which is absolute goodness. For every real there is an ideal. Human virtue is only imitating the gods when it aspires after good, as all nature does under their control. Thus there is nothing abstract about knowledge, which is inseparable from virtue. It commands and inspires love. The eudemonism of which Socrates is accused, is only the consequence of this belief in an ultimate design in the organisation of the world. It seems to him impossible that goodness should not lead to happiness; but it would be a grave misrepresentation to say that he places happiness rather than goodness before us as the great end of our endeavours. Happiness is the result of goodness; but the good is to be sought after first for its own sake. "Those desires only which improve a man's character by their gratification should be fulfilled, and those which deteriorate it, not."[1] Nothing that is indulged in except under the control of reason, is good. The greatest good is wisdom.

Philosophy thus understood is not divorced from religion; it is essentially religious and such was the teaching of Socrates. He rose far above the superstitions of the national religion, without openly challenging them. In the multiplicity of gods, he saw only various manifestations of the Divine, by which he meant the Absolute Good, though by *convenance* he gave it the name of Zeus. "He thought that the gods paid regard to men not in the way

[1] Dialogues of Plato, "Gorgias," 503.

which some people suppose, who imagine that the gods know some things and do not know others, but he considered the gods know all things, both what is said and what is done and what is meditated in silence, and are present everywhere and give admonition to men concerning everything human." "He used to say that the Divinity was his monitor; he also told many of his friends to do certain things and not to do others, intimating that the Divinity had forewarned him."[1]

This absolute and invisible God making Himself felt and heard in the secresy of the soul, and overruling all mortal affairs was not simply the "immobile Motor" whom Aristotle accepts as his supreme god. Socrates recognises in him the God of the conscience, the God whose will is to be obeyed, but who is able also to temper justice with mercy.

Socrates is not, however, wholly freed from dualism, for he leaves unexplained the origin of evil. In Theætetus he says: "Evils can never pass away; for there must always remain something which is antagonist to good. Having no place among the gods in heaven, of necessity they hover around the earthly nature and this mortal sphere. Wherefore we ought to fly away from earth to heaven as quickly as we can, and to fly away is to become like God, as far as this is possible; and to become like him is to become holy and just and wise."[2] Here the invincible element of materialistic fatalism shows itself again.

On the whole, however, the theodicy of Socrates is very grand. He applies it admirably to the various duties of men towards each other, both as citizens and in the family relations, and anticipates as far as is possible for a Greek of his day to do so, the great idea of the rights of man as man. Speaking of the family he says: "That which nature prescribes, the law approves, uniting the man and woman. As God has given them a community in the children, so the law ordains that there shall be community in the affairs of the home. It is more

[1] Xenophon, "Mem.," B. I. c. i. § 4.
[2] Dialogues of Plato, "Theætetus," § 176.

becoming for the woman to remain at home than to go much abroad, and it is a reproach for the man to confine himself to domestic affairs." [1] Taking this as his starting point, Socrates draws a beautiful picture of married life, in its purity and mutual respect. He even goes so far as to recognise moral dignity in the slave, whom he calls a worker, and commends to the affection of his master. He enjoins the citizen to seek the good of the state, and desires that love should govern the relations of men to one another, though he does not rise to the "enthusiasm of humanity." [2]

It is clear that the whole morality of Socrates was founded like his metaphysics (from which it was indeed inseparable) upon the very nature of man. He discerned in his own heart, the immortal unwritten laws which are of God. We know that in the "Phædo" and the "Cyropædia," he set the crown on his teaching by making the spirituality of the soul the ground of belief in its immortality. It is not without reason that the movement inaugurated by Socrates has been more than once compared to that initiated by Kant. Both gave the predominance to the moral idea over the pantheistic conception of the world, and both sought the basis of certainty in the depths of the Ego. We cannot carry the parallel further, for nothing could be more opposed to Kant's philosophy than Socrates' identification of moral with metaphysical truth. When we consider that he thus identified them, simply from his strong desire to establish moral certainty upon the very nature of things; when we think of his brave efforts to deliver his generation from a fatal scepticism, we must own that he was truly the saviour of the Greek conscience. If the doctrines of the Sophists had triumphed, there would have been an end not only of philosophy, but of religion. The whole religious movement of Eleusis would have been arrested. Socrates did not himself enter into that movement, but he helped to foster it by the mere fact that he re-established moral certainty, and set up an ideal of good far above man's poor and perverted attempts to realise it.

[1] See Fouillée, vol. ii. p. 115.
[2] See Xenophon's "Œconomist."

In view of such an ideal, the sacred sorrows of the conscience were renewed; and as Socrates had done more than any one to destroy faith in the gods of Olympus, so it was his work indirectly, but surely, to direct the minds of men to some coming manifestation of the Divine more worthy of the Absolute Good, which was the object of his worship. Hence we hail him as one of the great witnesses of moral truth. He was at once its prophet and martyr.

§ III.—PLATO.

None ever had a higher conception of philosophy than Plato. Like Socrates, he did not divorce the theoretical from the practical; he also desired that doctrine should lead to action. Hence the prominence which he gives to his master in setting forth his own system. One might almost say that Socrates was to him the Word, that is, the incarnation of the truth, as he discerned it. And yet Plato was not a servile disciple, for he greatly expanded and largely supplemented the teaching he had received, while always keeping on the same subjective lines. Like Socrates, Plato sought the explanation of things in the concepts of the mind, thus confirming the triumph of humanism over nature in the higher sphere of thought. In these concepts he was not content to recognise only the permanent universal element—the common nature, as distinguished from the sensuous and the phenomenal. "He goes further, and maintains that it is only by reflection in concepts, in the forms of things or ideas, that true and original Being can be attained; the truth of our conceptions, therefore, is conditioned by the reality of their object, and keeps step with it."[1] We shall show that this "true being" has not, however, vanquished the lower changing and perishable being, which is simply not-being. Plato, like Socrates, falls into dualism.

Born towards the close of the age of Pericles, and connected by birth or friendship with the most illustrious men of the republic, Plato began by cultivating the art of poetry, which he subsequently tried to proscribe in the republic, but could never effectually banish from his own

[1] Zeller, p. 140.

genius. Indeed, if poetry is to be recognised apart from the arrangement of rhythmic syllables, Plato is one of the first poets of Greece. From the time that he came to know Socrates, he devoted himself to lofty speculation. The vast extent of his studies and of his travels (the latter probably exaggerated) put him in possession of all the treasures of science and religion accumulated before his days.[1] Writing in the finest of all languages, the most subtle instrument of the intellect; uniting, as M. Cousin has said, the sublime and the graceful, by turns ingenious and brilliant, gifted with a creative imagination that gave transparent form to his thoughts; an inspired artist no less than a profound metaphysician, Plato has left in his "Dialogues" one of those perfect works such as the world has rarely seen. When he says in his Republic that the most entrancing spectacle would be the unison of a mind and body of equal beauty, with all their qualities in perfect harmony and correspondence, he unwittingly describes his own writings, for in his style, thought finds a form worthy of herself.[2]

Plato, like Socrates, had a fervent love for truth. In the Symposium we read: "This is that life above all others which a man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing only and conversing with them without meat or drink, if that were possible—you only want to be with them and look at them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean pure, and clear, and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollution of mortality, and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty divine and simple? Do you not see that in that communion, only beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue, to

[1] See Ritter, "History of Ancient Philosophy," vol. ii. p. 143, *et seq.*
[2] See Plato, Dialogues, Republic.

become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?"[1]

Plato sets before us his highest and most austere ideal of this love of truth and beauty, when he says that the man who is possessed by it will "abstain as far as possible from intercourse and communication with the body, except so far as is absolutely necessary," till released unsullied from the vanity of the body, he shall know by himself all that is pure. He adds: "For that the impure ever attain to the pure is I fear unlawful."[2] The true philosopher is he who loves to contemplate truth for its own sake: "He whose mind is fixed upon true being, has no time to look down upon earthly affairs, or to be filled with malice and envy, warring against men; his eye is ever directed towards fixed and immutable principles, which he sees neither injuring nor injured by one another, but all in order, moving according to reason. These he imitates, and to these he will, as far as he can, conform himself. Can a man help imitating that with which he holds reverential converse?"[3]

We must now endeavour to follow the main lines of a system so noble in its aims and inspiration. Plato begins by defending science, true science worthy of the name. This is distinguished not only from ignorance but from opinion, which is a premature conclusion of the mind, founded not upon careful examination, but upon passing and changeful impressions. There is nothing certain and absolute in opinion; if it escapes the negations of ignorance, it yet does not know true being; it is, in the language of Plato, a compound of being and not-being. Knowledge, on the contrary, rises above all that is contingent and conditioned, and deals with pure, immutable, eternal being. "The soul is like the eye; when resting upon that on which truth and being shine, the soul perceives and understands, and is radiant with intelligence; but when turned towards the twilight of becoming and perishing then she has opinion only, and goes blinking about, and is first of one opinion and then of another, and seems to have no intelligence."[4]

[1] Symposium.
[2] Phædo, §211, 212.
[3] Republic, Book VI. § 500.
[4] Ibid., § 508.

Under its higher form, science takes the name of dialectics. This is distinguished from physics, morals and politics, in that the object of its research is not the various manifestations of being, but being itself, and that it only pauses when it has arrived at the absolute and unconditioned. Even thus understood, science impinges upon the domain of morals, for true being is inseparable from absolute good. To know the one is to know the other. Science, in this higher sense, is virtue, and ignorance, by the same necessity, is sin. Sin is another name for error. Plato is, on this point, a true disciple of Socrates.

In defining true being, he does not go so far as to deny, with Xenophanes and Zeno, multiplicity and motion; he recognises and establishes their reality. One can but be astonished in reading Parmenides and Theætetus with the ingenious character of the argument, which often turns on subtle points of grammatical analysis. Plato shows that human language implies at once unity and plurality; for the words isolated have no meaning; they only become clear to the mind through their connection. A phrase thus combines multiplicity and unity. The laws of knowledge tend to the same result. In all knowledge there is duality, a subject and an object, the knower and the known. This subtle dialectic, peculiarly adapted as it was to the opponents of Plato, covers a profound thought which runs through the whole of his philosophy. Sharing in the great movement of Hellenic humanism, he admits, like his master, that man was made in the image of God. His reason is divine. Consequently the laws of his reason, manifested by the laws of language, are those of being in general.

Grammar thus acquires great importance, from that faith in the soul of man which, with Plato, is the basis of all knowledge. In his view, knowledge originates in the intuitions of primordial truth in the human spirit. "In its earlier existence our soul has seen the ideas of which it is reminded by the sight of their sensuous copies."[1] In Phædo he says: "There is nothing which to my

[1] Zeller, p. 153.

mind is so evident as that beauty and goodness have a most real and absolute existence; and I am satisfied with the proof."[1]

The soul springs upward towards that which is immutable and eternal, as itself of the same nature. All the qualities of the soul—activity, life, spontaneity, intelligence, are found in God in eternal perfection.[2]

The idea originating in the reason is proved by reasoning. Thus Plato takes natural faith as the starting point from which to arrive at reasonable knowledge. Contingent and multiple being, endowed with motion, is not the opposite of being, because it has a separate existence of its own, but it is not the true being. It holds an intermediate position. It is the "eternal *other*," always blended with absolute being.[3] It is the element of contingency, of plurality, of change; or to give it its true name—of matter; not the gross matter which can be handled and felt, but a subtle matter everywhere diffused and attached to absolute being.

Evil is inherent in the condition of the finite and multiple being, because it is inherent in matter. Eternal as being itself, the relative not-being will have no end, as it had no beginning. This is the radical error of Platonism from which arise all its mistakes in physics, morals and politics. It would lead logically to pantheistic nihilism, but for the admirable moral sentiment which runs through it.

True being is thus everywhere blended with contingent being. It is the all-pervading element of unity, while contingent being represents diversity and multiplicity. The element of unity in everything is its prototype or its idea. There is a world of prototypes or ideas of all existing things, a higher sphere of being, into which we enter by dialectic, as we rise from the contingent to the absolute, from the multiple to the One. In Parmenides we read: "Ideas are, as it were, patterns fixed in nature, and other things are like them and resemblances of them; and what is meant by the participation of other things in the ideas, is really assimilation to them."[4]

[1] Phædo, § 77.
[2] Fouillée, vol. i. p. 311.
[3] See Sophist.
[4] Plato, Parmenides, § 132.

These ideas of things are connected with one another; they form a harmonious whole, and are all to lead up to one supreme idea of good, in which they are all comprised. This diffuses light and truth over the objects of knowledge, and gives to the soul the faculty of knowing. In the Republic we read: "My opinion is that in the world of knowledge, the idea of the good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this world, and the source of truth and reason in the other; and is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed."[1]

This idea of good is like the sun which not only renders things visible, but is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way, the cause of all things. Thus intelligent beings derive not only their intelligence but their very existence from the ideal good. This Absolute Good is Plato's God. Indeed he says of God, that He is the source of all good, the principle of all ideas, the Artificer who frames all things; or again: "an abiding and unchangeable pattern." He says: "Let me tell you why the Creator created and made the universe. He was good, and no goodness can ever have jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible. This is the true beginning of creation and of the world, as we shall do well in believing on the testimony of wise men. God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad in so far as this could be accomplished. Wherefore also, finding the whole sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly manner, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was far better than the other. Now the deeds of him who is the best can never be or have been other than the fairest; and the Creator reflecting upon the visible work of nature found that no unintelligent creation taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not exist in anything which was devoid of soul.

[1] Republic, Book VII. § 517.

For these reasons he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, and framed the universe to be the best and fairest in the order of nature. And therefore using the language of probability we may say that the world became a living soul and truly rational through the providence of God."[1]

Thus Platonism does not really recognise a creative act. Its god only introduces order and harmony into a chaos eternal as himself, which is nothing else than not-being, that element of diversity and divisibility which the philosopher can neither get rid of nor explain.

The Timæus gives a description of the formation of the world-soul, in which, veiled amid much that is fantastic, the true meaning seems to be that the soul stands midway between ideas and the corporeal world, and unites both. It is incorporeal and ever the same, like ideas, but diffused throughout the world, and moving it by virtue of its own original motion. It includes in itself all the relations of number and measure; it creates all the regularity and harmony of the world. All reason and knowledge in the universe, and in the individual are caused by its rationality and knowledge."[2]

The account of the world-life is summed up thus in the closing words of Timæus: "And so we may say that our discourse about the nature of the universe has come to an end. The world has received animals mortal and immortal, and is fulfilled with them, and has become a visible animal containing the visible—the sensible God who is the image of the intellectual, greatest, best, fairest, and most perfect,—the one only-begotten universe."[3]

From this divine and unique animal, called the world, God caused to proceed all the species of animals which the mind perceives to be comprised in the ideal animal, which is the prototype of creation not only in its broad outlines but in all its details. There are four species of animals: the celestial race of the gods, the volatile species which traverses the clouds, that which inhabits the waters, and that which walks the earth. Every star is a divine and eternal animal, a true though secondary divinity.

[1] Timæus, § 29, 30. [2] Zeller, p. 149. [3] Timæus, § 92.

These brilliant gods, whose mysterious movements in the heavens our eye can follow, have been entrusted with the creation of the lower orders of being. They constitute the Greek Olympus. The supreme God bestows on them the divine and immortal part which is to be "woven together" with the immortal, at least, in the case of those beings, who, like man, still reproduce in one side of their nature the type of the absolute good.[1] Every one of these beings is in connection with a particular star into which it will return, if by virtuous action it makes the divine triumph over the sensuous in its nature. Those, on the other hand, who give the reins to evil, will after death undergo a series of migrations through lower forms of existence, till their purification is complete.[2] The predominance of the divine over the material element is impossible so long as the lawless motions of the body have not been brought under the control of the reason. Plato distinguishes three parts in man: first, reason, which comes from the supreme God; second, the body, which is the material element; third, the soul, which is the intermediary link.

Man is thus formed in the image of the world, of which he is in some sort a model in miniature. By his higher nature he is akin to God; by his lower nature he belongs to incoherent matter—the matrix of all beings. His reason reflects the divine world of ideas, the world of beauty, of harmony, of good. On this side, man is immortal; but this immortality is nowhere clearly defined, and it is impossible to tell if it is really personal. In any case, the interval is still great between man and God. In the "Symposium" we read: "Love is a great spirit, and like all spirits, he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal. He interprets between gods and men, conveying to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods. He is the mediator who spans the chasm which divides them, and in him all is bound together, and through him the arts of the prophet and the priest, their sacrifices and mysteries and charms, and all prophecy and incantation

[1] Timæus, §·41. [2] Ibid., § 90, 91.

find their way. For God mingles not with man; but through Love all the intercourse and speech of God with man, whether asleep or awake, is carried on."[1]

Such are the general outlines of Plato's physics, which we cannot do more than indicate. They exhibit at once the strength and weakness of his dialectic. They are a great attempt to comprehend all in the unity of the divine thought, an attempt perpetually frustrated by a persistent dualism. The God of Plato undergoes in all spheres of life a veritable torture of Mezentius, in being eternally bound to undisciplined matter, which he did not produce and cannot destroy. The idea of good, the principle of unity, is, as it were, riveted to the incoherent diversity which it can never more than half subdue. Evil underlies the fairest creations of good, and the more these are multiplied the more evil abounds. The scale of being is a descending one. Man is a degeneration from the gods, woman from the man, and so on. Thus Platonist dualism and the Indian doctrine of emanations move on convergent lines.

Logically, the God of Plato never attains to true being. If we look at him in himself, he is at once universal and impersonal; but as soon as he enters into relation with man, by a strange paradox he acts as if endowed with personality. In a word all things exist in him in their unity and ideal perfection. Creation, which in one aspect, is a diminution of the absolute being, is in another aspect, a good work, since divine ideas are embodied in things. This thought inspired the sublime saying of Plato; "The world was born when love was born." With Plato, the mystery of love is the very mystery of creation. Love binds together earth and heaven. Coming down from God to man, it returns from man to God.

On the question of free will Plato is sufficiently indefinite. He seems sometimes to assign to it a part in the determination of our destiny, but he soon reverts to the element of necessity as inherent in matter, though he cannot abandon the Socratic idea that knowledge and virtue are identical. According to M. Fouillée, he holds

[1] Symposium, § 202.

[2] Fouillée, vol. i. p. 539.

the freedom of the intellect, but the fatalism of passion. He understands by liberty, the state in which the soul no longer finds any obstacles in the way of its union with good and with its object.[1] Sometimes it acts under the influence of external causes and of matter, and then it is a slave; sometimes it follows the essential tendency of the reason and the will towards ideas, and then it is free. Reason, knowledge, love, the inclination to good, virtue, liberty are synonymous terms. "No one," says Plato, "does evil willingly." There is then an element of fatalism which deprives free will of its reality. This is the result of the element of necessity inherent in matter.

Plato regards our actual condition as a state of decadence, and consequently as a punishment. We must be careful, however, not to identify this state of decadence with the dogma of the Fall, for it is not so much our doing as the result of the conditions of the earthly life, in which there is an inevitable admixture of the contingent and material element. It is the fatal necessity imposed upon us in our existence as finite and individual beings. But soon losing sight of his metaphysical error, Plato expresses in strains of sublime eloquence the poignant sense of our actual condition. In Phædrus he says: "Every soul of man has in the way of nature beheld true being; this was the condition of her passing into the form of men. But all souls do not easily recall the things of the other world; they may have seen them for a short time only, or they may have been unfortunate in their earthly lot, and may have lost the memory of holy things which they saw there, through some evil and corrupting association. Few only retain an adequate remembrance of them; and they, when they behold any image of that other world, are rapt in amazement; but they are ignorant of what this rapture means, because they do not clearly perceive. For there is no light in the earthly copies of justice or temperance or any of the higher qualities which are precious to souls: they are seen through a glass dimly; and there are few who, going to the images, behold in them the realities, and they only with difficulty. They might have seen beauty shining in

[1] Fouillée, vol. i. p. 338.

brightness, when, with the happy band following in the train of Zeus, as we philosophers, or of other gods as others did, they saw a vision and were initiated into mysteries which may truly be called most blessed, and which we celebrated in our state of innocence; having no experience of evils as yet to come; admitted to the sight of apparitions innocent and simple and calm and happy, shining in pure light, pure ourselves and not yet enshrined in that living tomb which we carry about now that we are imprisoned in the body, like an oyster in his shell. Let me linger long over the memory of scenes which have passed away."[1]

Man thus loses the memory of the holy, through evil and corrupting associations. He is like those captives so poetically represented in the seventh book of the Republic. "Behold! human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light, and reaching all along the den. They have been here from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them from turning their heads. Above and behind them, the light of a fire is blazing at a distance, and they see only their own shadows or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave."[2]

Even these dim and passing shadows suffice, however, to revive the memory of the height from which man has fallen; unless, indeed, he has laid the reins on the neck of the wild and fiery steed, which, in Platonic symbolism, represents the material life. Man, still retaining some dim recollection of the holy mysteries, is drawn by the imperfect beauty which he sees around him, towards the perfect beauty on which he once gazed. His soul recovers the wings which formerly bore him aloft into the serene regions of essential life and beauty. "Forgetting earthly interests, and wrapt in the divine, the vulgar deem him mad, and rebuke him; they do not see that he is inspired."[3]

[1] Phædrus, § 250. [2] Republic, Book VII. § 514.
[3] Phædrus, § 249.

The beautiful and the true is a ray from God, and all broken and transitory as it is in its earthly manifestation, it suffices to recall the supreme beauty and to awaken desire after it. Philosophy is not to be mere barren contemplation. "He who loves the beautiful is called a lover because he partakes of it." So the philosopher is to realise as well as to admire the good, and Plato's whole system of morals is designed to show how this may be. We know already the nature of the true good. The true good is God. To practise the good is to resemble God. But God is the One and Absolute Being. Evil, as we have seen, is identified with contingency, diversity, the material life. To resemble God is then to aspire to unity, and, as far as possible, to eschew and repudiate the contingent with all appertaining to it, both in the inner and the outer life.

Such a system of morals, identified as it is with the Platonist metaphysics, necessarily leads to the sacrifice of individuality. It tends to absorb the parts in the whole, and to ignore all individuality. This explains how it was that Plato's system of morals was inseparable from his politics, and that he expounded both in the same treatise. In a system in which the good is unity, society is everything, the individual nothing. The primary duty is to get rid of all individuality. It is then only in the social sphere, or in the republic, that man can realise the good; for the State alone corresponds to that world of ideas which is the world of unity. Thus the type of the good for the individual, is borrowed from the State, which brings all classes of society into unity.[1] Evil in us is a schism, it is the revolt of some faculty breaking the inward unity and destroying the equilibrium of the soul by setting one part against another.

Justice consists in binding together all the elements which compose the man, so that from their concert, there results a harmonious and well-regulated whole. Plato distinguishes four virtues: temperance, courage, justice, and reason. To these four virtues correspond four orders in the State: slaves, warriors, magistrates, and philo-

[1] Republic, Book IV. § 435.

sophers. The government of the State belongs to the latter.[1] Justice is especially incumbent on magistrates, courage on soldiers, reason on philosophers. Temperance, which, in the individual, consists in subjecting the lower part of the nature in man to the higher, is realised in the republic by the maintenance of the social hierarchy, and thus it is practised by the lower classes no less than by magistrates and soldiers. By means of this virtue, harmony is preserved in the State, which thus comes to reflect, in some degree, the harmony and unity of the world of ideas.

All the grave errors in the picture that Plato draws for us of the ideal republic, are traceable to the fundamental error of his system. If he ignores the rights of property, if he destroys family life by sanctioning a community of wives and children, if he conceives of education as carried on wholly outside the paternal roof, he is true in all this to the general tenor of his teaching, which involves the sacrifice of the individual to the phantom of unity, and attaches no importance to the separate parts in comparison with the whole. Thus the barrier behind which private life entrenches itself, must be thrown down; for the community of goods is the ideal of a truly philosophical republic. Logically, Plato ought to have gone further still. He ought to have arrived at the pure asceticism contained in germ in all dualism. But Greece, and especially Greece after Pericles, is not the East. The air that the men of Greece breathe makes them strong and free; it stirs them to action. Plato does not then teach universal annihilation, but only the effacement of individuality. Just as time was to him a fleeting image of eternity, so he desired that the ideal Republic should be a fleeting image of the unity of the higher world. However much we may regret his errors, it must be owned that the picture which he draws for us of the ideal Republic in which everything, from gymnastics and music to philosophy, was to aim at godlikeness, is full of a fine spirituality. Very touching is the manner in which he regards the education of the young.

[1] See Republic, Book IV.

He would have them sedulously guarded from all corrupting influences, and would, as he says, foster the growth of their soul-wings, by exercise in the luminous atmosphere of truth and beauty which is alone adapted for them.

We thus bring to a close our rapid sketch of this great philosophy which has played so important a part in the intellectual and religious history of mankind. We can easily measure the distance which divides it from Christianity. Even setting aside the metaphysical, and looking only at the moral aspect of the Platonist teaching, there is as much difference between the morality of Christ and that of Plato, as between the Christian teaching and the esoteric speculation of the Academy. It cannot indeed be otherwise, for the separation of dogma from morality is an invention of that lower philosophy which argues that if the application be right, we need not inquire into the principle. It would be strange to apply such a doctrine to the great idealist of antiquity, who only lived for the higher and ideal world. As is the god, so will be the idea of duty; like doctrine, like morals. The same interval which divides the god of Plato from the Christian's God exists between the two systems of morals. On the one hand, dualism leads to the annihilation of all individuality; on the other, a triumphant spiritualism consecrates personal character, and makes it the corner-stone of the building. Plato tells man, as the Gospel does, that his duty is to be like God; but while the God of Plato is only a sublime idea—Absolute Reason and Goodness—never entering into direct communication with men, the God of the Christians is the living God, the Holy and Perfect One, the God revealed in Christ, whose name is Love. Hence the breadth and vital force of the Gospel morality.

While pointing out the deficiencies in the teaching of Plato, we by no means intend to depreciate it. On the contrary, we would rather magnify its true mission. If we regard this sublime philosophy as a preparation for Christianity and not as an equivalent to the Gospel, it will appear to us truly admirable. It struck a deathblow at polytheism by the keen shafts of its dialectics. Plato, the poet-philosopher, sacrificed even Homer himself to monotheism, and the greatness of the sacrifice showed

the strength of the conviction. He could not pardon the siren whose songs had bewitched Greece, or pay homage to the brilliant poetry which had degraded the tone of the national religion. He crowned the Greek genius of poetry, but denounced it at the same time as having lowered the religious ideal of the conscience.

Plato accepted humanism, but he idealised and transformed it, for he did not deify all the elements of human nature. He recognised the divine only in the higher part of our nature. He raised Hellenism to its highest point. He gathered up all its noblest elements, that he might yet further purify and harmonise them. Thus he was, next to Socrates, the inspired apostle of the moral idea, not indeed apprehending it in all its depth, but presenting it nevertheless in its purity and inflexible rigour. Any one who reads Gorgias, Philebus, and above all the Republic and the Laws, cannot fail to be impressed with the way in which the great voice of the human conscience makes itself heard above all the sophisms of self-interest, and the tumult of passion. If, in the first part of the Republic, we watch the triumph of the unjust man, it is only in order that in the conclusion we may see how false and fleeting this triumph was. "Look at things," he says, "as they really are, and you will see that the clever unjust are in the case of runners, who run well from the starting-place to the goal but not back again from the goal: they go off at a great pace, but in the end only look foolish, slinking away with their ears down on their shoulders, and without a crown; but the true runner comes to the finish and receives the prize and is crowned. And this is the way with the just; he who endures to the end of every action and occasion of his entire life, has a good report and carries off the prize which men bestow. . . . This then must be our notion of the just man, that even when he is in poverty and sickness, or any other seeming misfortune, all things will in the end work together for good to him in life and death: for the gods have a care of any one whose desire is to become just and to be like God, as far as man can attain to the divine likeness, by the pursuit of virtue."[1]

[1] Republic Book X. § 613.

Plato rises so far above all eudemonism that he declares plainly in Gorgias that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong. "Of all that has been said, nothing remains unshaken but the saying, that to do injustice is more to be avoided than to suffer injustice, and that the reality and not the appearance of virtue is to be followed above all things, as well in public as in private life. And never mind if some one despises you as a fool, and insults you, if he has a mind; let him strike you, by Zeus, and do you be of good cheer and do not mind the insulting blow, for you will never come to harm in the practice of virtue, if you are a really good and true man."[1]

The ethics of Plato have further this remarkable characteristic, that they are not tainted with the cold and frivolous Pelagianism which underlies all purely philosophical systems of morality. He recognises that man cannot unaided rise to goodness. "Virtue" we read in Meno, "is not natural to man neither can he be taught it, but it proceeds from a divine influence. Virtue comes by a gift of God to those who possess it."[2]

Plato, in formulating his system of morals, was carrying on and completing the work of Socrates. The voice of God still reverberated in the human heart, and it found in Plato an echo to which all Greece listened, though the austere revelation of conscience was sometimes conveyed in language so harmonious, that a nation of artists, like the Greeks, were somewhat diverted from the substance of the message by the beauty of the form. The tables of the eternal law, though hewn of the whitest marble and marvellously carved, were none the less read by her. This is a fact of immense importance in the work of preparation going on in the midst of paganism. Moreover Plato was not content with bringing home to his fellow-citizens the sense of their degeneracy, by his pure presentation of the moral ideal. He affirmed the fact of human deterioration in vigorous language, as we have already shown in our extracts from Phædrus. The soul in its present state seemed to him disfigured by ten thousand ills, like Glaucus the sea-god whose original image

[1] Gorgias, § 527.

[2] See the conclusion of Meno.

can hardly be discerned, because his natural members are broken off and crushed and in many ways damaged by the waves; and incrustrations have grown over them of sea-weed and shells and stones so that he is liker to some sea-monster than to his natural form."[1]

We see also in Plato's penal legislation, that he recognised the lawfulness of punishment from a moral point of view, and assigned a place to it in his idea of expiation.[2] It was impossible, that insisting as he did, upon the pitiful condition of man upon earth, he should not have helped to arouse in his disciples earnest aspirations after a better state. Unhappily he partly falsified this longing even while he stimulated it; for he taught salvation by knowledge rather than by a return to God. Such a salvation was purely intellectual and consequently essentially esoteric, and little adapted to the masses of mankind. This is the weak point of Platonism, as of all philosophy which does not lead to a practical religion. It sees what man wants, but cannot give it to him. Man cannot be saved by a system, for salvation is a fact. But it was nevertheless an inestimable service rendered to fallen humanity to make it conscious of its deepest needs, and to give them immortal expression.

After all, Platonism was the most powerful protest of the spirit against the flesh, uttered in the ancient world. We cannot better summarise our estimate of this glorious school, than by applying to it that which Plato so poetically says of love in his Symposium:[3] that it is the desire of "the everlasting possession of the good," not yet realised.

The reader will see how impossible it is to maintain, as M. Havet does, that between Plato and the Gospel there is only a difference of degree, and that Christianity has simply added the cross and inscribed its name upon the edifice erected by the great philosopher. We in no way depreciate the beauty of the admirable work of Platonism, but to identify it with Christianity is to lose sight of the dualist element, which mingles with its metaphysics and lowers its system of morals, pure, as by com-

[1] Republic, Book X. § 611.
[2] See Gorgias and Havet, i. 242.
[3] Symposium, 204.

parison, it is. It is also to ignore the specific claim of the Gospel to be something more than a mere doctrine, to be in fact, the great fulfilment of all the aspirations of the past.

§ IV.—ARISTOTLE.[1]

We shall not dwell long on the philosophy of Aristotle, great as its influence was. His peculiar honour is that he originated an immortal method, and created the scientific encyclopædia of the ancient world.[2] The Aristotelian method differs, as we know, markedly from the Platonic, though Aristotle was for twenty years a disciple in the school of Plato, and on one point remained always faithful to him. He held as firmly as Plato, and perhaps even more consistently, the analogy between the higher elements of human nature and deity. His god is, in truth, mind in its highest exercise. Hence Aristotle studied the mind of man and its revelation in language, with scrupulous care, hoping in this way to arrive at the universal laws of being. We can understand the importance, which, from this point of view, he attached to logic. The salient contrast between the method of the two philosophers was this. Plato rose directly to concepts, from which he constructed his cosmos, basing his conclusions entirely on the general and the eternal. Aristotle, on the other hand, took as his basis, the particular, the individual, the contingent, from which by a process of laborious induction, he deduced all his conclusions. We shall not follow him in this close analysis of forms and methods, from which he derived the great principles of his philosophy. Just as in our ordinary use of the syllogism, we argue from the known to the unknown, so science, according to Aristotle, should take as its point of departure, that which is most directly known to us, *i.e.* that which we know by means of sensation. Sensation, being repeated, produces memory, and memory experience, and experience science. The mind of man includes two kinds

[1] We refer the reader to the complete translation of the works of Aristotle by M. Barthélémy St. Hilaire, with the valuable commentaries accompanying it.

[2] Havet, vol. i. p. 171.

of intelligence—the passive, which is, as it were, the receptacle of sensation, and the active, which sets the impress of thought on the ideas produced by the senses. It evolves from these, the first principles and eternal truths of which it has the type in itself. This active intelligence is the divine element of mind. It is this which imparts an intelligible character and definite form to the incoherent and indistinct elements, which come to us through the channel of sensation. Thus, in man himself we find the duality of matter and form, which runs through the whole Aristotelian system. Matter is the passive, indeterminate, general; form, on the other hand, is the active, determinate, particular. Mind is allied to the material world on its passive side, and to the world of the divine by its active functions.[1] Aristotle raises these results of logic to the height of universal principles. He proves that the essence of a thing does not consist in that which it has in common with all other things, but in that which distinguishes it from others. It is by these differences that it is defined; these then are its essential elements. Consequently the essence of being must not be sought in the element of unity and universality, or in the concept, as Plato taught; but in the element of diversity and individuality. Nothing could be more diametrically opposed to Platonism than this.

The opposition between matter and form, in Aristotle's system, corresponds to the opposition which exists between the general and the particular. On the one hand is pure passivity, not-being, the potential, the virtual; on the other hand activity, being, thought. Matter and form are the two great causes from which all beings proceed. Aristotle attaches great importance to this distinction between simply virtual, potential being, and true being. The virtual only becomes the real by means of the formal or formative cause, which gives it the definite type in view of which it exists. It was by starting with this distinction between being *in posse* and being *de facto*, that Aristotle was led to affirm the pre-existence and eternal activity of the first principle. It was of necessity that at

[1] καὶ ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἐσχάτων ἐπ' ἀμφότερα Διὸ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος. Eth. Nic., vi. 12.

the origin of things there should exist one real being, else it would be impossible to understand how the merely virtual could ever, unaided, pass into the real. Since then, that which becomes, cannot proceed from that which is not, there must be prior to the becoming some absolute first principle. "This then is true, that there exists a Being from which all motion proceeds but that this moving cause is itself unmoved."[1] We arrive at the same result by another method. The formal cause is at the same time the moving and final cause,[2] for clearly it is the element of determination which imparts motion to passive matter by determining it; and it also is the fulfilment of being, since being does not exist really till it has passed from the indeterminate to the determinate.

"Motion or change is in fact nothing else than the realisation of the possible as such."[3] It is an eternal and permanent principle. If motion is thus eternal and universal, it is of necessity that there be a primary immovable, moving cause by which it is eternally produced. This first moving cause, unique because absolute, is the god of Aristotle. "The ultimate basis of all movement lies in the deity as the pure, perfect spirit, infinite in power. The activity of this spirit can only consist in thought; for every other activity has its object beyond itself, which is inconceivable in the activity of the perfect, self-sufficient being. This thought can never be in the condition of mere potentiality, it is a ceaseless activity of contemplation. It can only be its own object, for the value of thought is in proportion to the value of its contents, but only the divine spirit himself is the most valuable and complete object. Hence the thought of God is the 'thought of thought,' and his happiness consists in this unchangeable contemplation of self. The spirit does not operate on the world by passing from himself and directing his thought and volition towards it, but by his mere existence. As the highest good, the simply perfect being is also the final object of all things, that to which everything strives and

[1] Aristotle "Metaph.," Book IV. ch. viii. § 8.
[2] *πάντα τὰ γιγνόμενα ὑπό τε τίνος γίγνεται καὶ ἐκ τίνος.*
[3] Zeller, p. 191. Arist. "Phys." iii. 1.

moves; on it depends the uniform order, the cohesion and the life of the world."[1]

These principles are applied to physics. The heavenly sphere is first set in motion by the deity, and all the other spheres move after it. Movement is the end of all being; the soul, or rational energy is, to use the language of Aristotle, the ἐντελέχεια or "state of perfection" of the body. Morality, from this point of view, is a sort of spiritual mechanism; everything depends on motion; it is the science of equilibrium in the higher sphere of life. We must not expect from the philosophy of Aristotle the soaring sublimity of Platonism; it skims the earth too closely.

Nevertheless, Aristotle has a high idea of man. He assigns to him the first place in this lower world, for the spirit directly informs the body. His vocation is to develop the spiritual being within him. His perception of material facts becomes a concept, a memory, pure thought, reason in exercise. His final aim is knowledge, which deals with the pure form of things. Happiness is to be proportioned to virtue; virtue is defined by Aristotle as the just measure or the just medium. The great Peripatetic philosopher, like Plato, sacrifices all to the State. The family is the end or the ἐντελέχεια of the individual, and the State of the family. The dignity of the individual is trampled under foot. Thus Aristotle avows without scruple, the most hateful principles in relation to slavery, and even as to the treatment of slaves, as practised in antiquity. Ingeniously applying his ontological principles to politics, he sees in the soil and in the population of a country, the material element of the State. It is for the social constitution to give it a form. We know what a brilliant light his genius cast upon politics. His love of the just medium led him to give the preference to government by the middle classes.

If we now try to form an estimate of the philosophy of Aristotle as a whole, it seems to us in one aspect to be worthy of the greatest period of Hellenism. We admire

[1] Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 193. See Aristotle, "Metaph.," Book XII.

it as the mightiest effort of the mind of man in antiquity. It has left abiding results both in psychology and logic.

It perfected the instrument of philosophic thought, giving it a subtleness and precision which it can never lose. As a whole, however, it seems to us inferior to Platonism. In combating that which was exaggerated in Plato's theory of ideas, it was led to a reaction against the ideal itself. Failing just as Platonism did, to explain dualism, it brought into prominence the aspect of the contingent and the particular, which Platonism had ignored. It is easy to foresee that the successors of Aristotle would soon forget the more elevated portion of his system, that which deals with the *primum mobile*, and would restrict themselves to that which is perceived by the senses. But it is from a moral point of view that the inferiority of Aristotle is most marked. His god, as he himself says, is above virtue;[1] he is pure thought, rather than goodness; unconcerned and alone, he enters into no relations with men. Morality has no divine basis; it has no eternal type before its eyes, no help to look for from on high. Thus the philosophy of Aristotle has had very little power over the consciences of men. His essential merit is to have given to Hellenic humanism, its most perfect formulary, by representing God as the eternal reason, the thought of thought, whose happiness consists in the unchangeable contemplation of self. Aristotle thus completed the downfall of polytheism in the higher regions of intelligence.

As we have already said, Aristotle, like Plato and all the other thinkers of the ancient world, makes shipwreck on the rock of dualism. Zeller says: "The only original difference is that between form and matter. This runs through everything. . . . On the quality of matter rests all imperfection of nature, and also differences so vital as the difference between the heavenly and earthly, the male and the female. It is due to the resistance of matter that nature can only rise by degrees from lower forms to higher."[2] "Aristotle attempts to find a bond which may establish the connection between the *νοῦς* (the

[1] Aristotle, "Ethics," Book VII. i.

[2] Zeller, p. 190.

spirit or thinking power) in man, and the animal soul, but he does not show us how the various qualities which he ascribes to each can be united without contradiction; nor has he even raised the question, what is the seat of the human personality. . . . On the combination of reason with the lower powers of the soul rest those spiritual activities by which man is raised above the animals. But Aristotle gives no further psychological explanation of the one or the other. . . . Aristotle unconditionally presupposes freedom of will and proves it by the fact that virtue is voluntary, and we are universally held accountable for our acts. . . . But more precise enquiries about the internal processes by which acts of will are realised, the possibility, and the limits of the freedom of the will, are not found in his writings."[1]

In spite of these deficiencies, however, Aristotle gave a powerful impetus to the triumph of humanism. In the transition from the East into Greece, the idea of God gained both in clearness and purity. Man began to understand that union with God must be something other than a pantheistic absorption, or a humanistic apotheosis.

[1] Zeller, pp. 207—209.

BOOK V.

GRECO-ROMAN PAGANISM AND ITS DECLINE.

CHAPTER I.

DECLINE OF ANCIENT PAGANISM, FROM THE TIME OF ALEXANDER AND UNDER THE ROMANS.

§ I.—Greece under Alexander and his Successors.

THE decadence of Hellenism begins at the period of its greatest outward glory. It goes back as far as the conquests of Alexander; for it was a retrogression when Greece succumbed to the influence of the East, and partially fell back from humanism, under the yoke of the religions of nature. This fusion of all religions, this synthesis of all the gods, could not fail in the end to be destructive to all. Upon their shattered altars rose another altar to the unknown God, the mysterious heir of all the ages, for whom the ancient world had long been waiting. From the time of Philip and Alexander, the old democratic type, so favourable to the development of the spirit of Hellenism, gradually disappeared. Not all at once, but little by little, with frequent intervals of recuperation, it lost its vitality. Athens lent a bright irridescence to decaying liberty. In that city of the Muses, political was inseparable from literary glory. Demosthenes, in his defence of the Republic, gave to the world the finest models of eloquence, and by the perfection of the mould in which he cast them, made immortal, discourses otherwise of transient interest. After his day, Athens steadily declined, and in spite of some yearnings after independence, she bowed her neck lower and lower under the yoke of the foreigner. The very people who had applauded the harangues of Demosthenes, were seen a few years after his heroic struggle against Macedonia, coming to meet King Demetrius with

crowns of laurel and such songs as these: "The other gods are far off, or have not ears; or perhaps they are not, or else they do not trouble themselves in the least about us; but thee we behold present, not a god of wood or of stone, but a true god."[1]

The various states of Greece shared the same fate. Tossed about from one tyrannous rule to another, under the lieutenants of Alexander, they attempted to regain their independence by forming confederations: but they could not agree even in the defence of their common cause. The Achæan and Ætolian leagues weakened each other by their divisions, and Sparta in vain essayed to regain the supremacy. Divided among themselves, these petty states called in the aid of dangerous allies, turning sometimes to Macedonia, sometimes to Egypt, and thus paving the way for the utter destruction of the freedom of Greece, which Rome would ere long crush for ever.

As the glory of Athens declined that of Alexandria increased, and it became the centre of Greek civilisation during this period. Athens had long been the most brilliant centre of Hellenism, its intellectual metropolis. Its civilisation was strong without hardness, graceful without effeminacy, combining in a harmonious whole, all the qualities of the Hellenic race. It was this which made this little country the classic soil of liberty and art; the beautiful in every department there appeared in the most delicate proportions and in singular perfection. Athens was truly the republic of letters, the ideal democracy in which qualities of mind out-weighed every other distinction, and where intellectual gifts developed themselves with marvellous facility, being stimulated by the noble rivalries of a free people. Alexandria, the new metropolis of Greece, was in every respect a contrast to Athens. Built by a great conqueror, who had dreamed of bringing the whole world under his own sceptre, it had been chosen by him to serve as a point of junction between East and West, and contained within its walls temples to the gods of Egypt as well as to those of Greece. It was always faithful to the idea of its founder. The genius of the East

[1] Ritter, "History of Ancient Philosophy," vol. iii. p. 378.

was there blended with that of the West, each reacting upon the other. Indefinitely extended under the Ptolemies, accumulating in its vast library all the treasures of ancient culture, and becoming the deposit of universal commerce, it was a cosmopolitan city rather than the capital of a kingdom.

It had in its midst representatives of all religions. Side by side with the temple of Jupiter, rose the temple of Serapis in white marble, and not far off, the Jewish synagogue. Alexandria became the cradle of a universal scepticism, which more and more obliterated the distinctive traits of the Greek spirit. As we turn from Athens to Alexandria, we can trace the transformation which the Greek mind underwent during this period, alike in religion and philosophy, in art and literature. The fall of liberty exercised considerable influence over the ancient world, where morality was so closely allied to politics, and the individual so completely merged in the State. The State having become enslaved and humiliated, the moral ideal itself was dimmed, and demoralisation, the result of discouragement, made appalling progress in a state of society which offered no adequate consolation of a higher order. In religion, the purification of mythology, which had been carried on successfully by the great artists and great poets of the age of Pericles, entirely ceased.

We have already referred to the prejudicial influence of the Greek philosophy upon the national faiths. It had destroyed faith in the Olympian gods by advancing a higher ideal, but one too vague to take the place of the old popular belief. The language of the philosophers had moreover retained a certain ambiguity upon this delicate point. The death of Socrates had taught them prudence. They shrank from taking up a well-defined position. Polytheism was secretly undermined but not openly overthrown. The philosophers had left it only a lifeless corpse, for they had sapped faith in the Homeric gods; but the corpse was still there; and it was needful to bow down to it.

Greece knew both too much and too little. It knew too much to believe fully in its gods, and too little to worship another God. Hence it is not surprising if a

period of religious decadence succeeded that of purification. Apotheoses were multiplied. Certain mighty kings were worshipped and feasts held in their honour. Among the monarchs thus deified were Demetrius Poliorcetes at Athens, Attalus at Sicyon, Antigonus in Achaia, Ptolemy in Rhodes. At the same time, contact with the East revived the old nature-religion. Impiety took advantage of this degradation of the religious idea, and Euhemerus of Messene (300 B.C.) declared openly that the gods were only ancient kings, deified after their death by fear or superstition. He spoke of Aphrodite as only a courtesan of marvellous beauty, and said that Harmonia was a Phrygian dancing-girl seduced by Cadmus.

The philosophic movement of this period, even as represented in its best school, tended to overthrow the old beliefs. The more elevated portion of the Metaphysics of Aristotle which treats of the immovable moving cause, the blessed God absorbed in the contemplation of Himself, "the thought of thought;" all this was soon forgotten or misunderstood. The counsel which, in opposition to Platonism, Aristotle had given to his disciples, to fix their attention primarily on that which they learned through the medium of the senses, became exaggerated and distorted, and in a time of moral enervation easily led on to sensualism. Even the immediate disciples of Aristotle, Dicæarchus and Straton, resolutely eliminated the idea of God from their philosophy. They asserted that no divinity was needed to explain the formation of the world. As has always been the case in times of social decadence, a sceptical school now arose which concealed under a sardonic smile, the bitterness it really felt at heart. It pretended to expose cruel deceptions, and in reality it only trampled under foot all that was high and noble. Just as the earlier sceptics had confronted the Atomist school, with the doctrines of the Eleatics and *vice versa*, so these new sceptics opposed Aristotle to Plato, and Plato to Aristotle.

It was their sport to see these two illustrious philosophers transfix each other with their darts and finally succumb, carrying with them in their downfall, the philosophy of which they were the grandest exponents.

Timon and Pyrrho affirmed that of everything it may be said with equal truth that it is and it is not; and that therefore men may cease from troubling themselves and subside into the absolute calm, which they dignified with the name of *ἀταραξία* or apathy.[1] Calm spectators of the dishonour of their country, and surrounded by every sort of cowardice and corruption, they were the authors of this maxim worthy of a time when liberty fell, betrayed by those who should have been its champions: "There is nothing shameful or right in itself; law and custom alone determine equity and inequity."[2] When it reaches this extreme point, scepticism dies in the void which it has created around itself. Pyrrho declared that even a strong negation implied the possibility of a certainty, and must therefore be avoided.

If the importance of any school were truly measured by the duration of its influence, no glory ever equalled that of the Epicurean and Stoical schools. Both have this feature in common, that they throw man back into himself, leaving him utterly indifferent to the general scope of things and to the noble conflicts of public life. Zeller justly observes that true philosophy, is the daughter of liberty.[3] The mind of man had felt its power in the grand public life of the Athenian democracy, and had thus been led to cultivate an objective philosophy, embracing the world around it. When the days of decadence came, philosophy became subjective and centred on the question of happiness. The Epicureans sought happiness in pleasure, the Stoics in virtue; but Stoics and Epicureans had these two characteristics in common, that they abandoned metaphysics and yielded themselves up to a sensuous life. Not much need be said in proof of this as regards the Epicureans. According to Epicurus, philosophy is essentially the art of making oneself happy. It is therefore primarily a system of morality, but what a morality! Its very first principle is that

[1] Zeller, p. 269.

[2] *Οὔτε καλὸν οὔτε αἰσχρὸν, μηδὲν εἶναι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ νόμῳ δὲ καὶ ἔθει πάντα.* Diog. Laert.

[3] On the Epicureans, the Stoics and the Pyrrhonians, see Zeller, pp. 244—269.

suffering of all kinds is to be eschewed and happiness to be sought in pleasure.[1] Our only guide in our choice of pleasures is to be the thought of avoiding all suffering. It is on this ground that virtue (which is only another name for moderation) is desirable.[2] Not that we need abstain from other sources of pleasure. Epicurus says plainly that the root and beginning of all good is in the pleasures of the table.[3] He adds that we must avoid injuring our neighbour, lest he should harm us in return. Logically everything is traced to the senses. Pure atomism is the principle of the Epicurean physics. Bodies are formed by the combination of atoms. The soul is only composed of light atoms; it will perish when these become disintegrated.[4] In order to establish his doctrine that we have to make a choice among different pleasures, Epicurus admitted that atoms had not always been subject to an inflexible movement; but had originally been liable to accidental changes. This initial stage is called *clinamen.* These deviations gave scope for a certain liberty of choice, which was however in no way akin to moral freedom. The gods are material beings like the soul of man;[5] they are impassive, not concerning themselves about us; and there is no occasion for us to weary them, or rather to weary ourselves, by praying to them.[6] Such a philosophy pronounces its own sentence; it belongs to a time of slavery and corruption, for it proclaims the inanity of goodness and the lawfulness of lust. There is no surer way to bring a free people into bondage than thus morally to degrade it.

The Stoicism founded by Zeno, and supplemented by Cleanthes and Chrysippus, took as its basis, logical principles identical with those of Epicurus, but derived from

[1] Ἔλεγε τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐνέργειαν εἶναι λόγαις τὸν εὐδαίμονα βίον περιποιοῦσαν. See Ritter, "History of Ancient Philosophy," vol. iii. p. 405.

[2] Pleasure is the beginning and end of happiness. Man can only live pleasantly if he lives reasonably and justly. Diog. Laertes, x.

[3] Ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ ἡ τῆς γαστρὸς ἡδονή. Ritter, "History of Ancient Philosophy," vol. iii. p. 410.

[4] Cicero, "De finibus," i. 15. See Guyau, "La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec la morale contemporaine," 1878.

[5] Ἡ ψυχὴ σῶμα. Diog. Laert., x. 63.

[6] Diog. Laert., x. 163.

them diametrically opposite moral conclusions. Zeno also made sensation the starting point of all knowledge. Sensation writes ideas upon the soul as upon wax softened and prepared to receive impressions.[1] Certainty is based upon sensible evidence, and truth itself has a body.[2] The Stoics professed the most decided pantheism. The two principles of the universe, according to them, are matter and reason, which is only a subtle fire, the active principle pervading the universe, like the blood in the veins.[3] This is the true god, the universal Jupiter present in everything.[4] The world, as a whole, is a realisation of the good; evil is only relative and apparent. It has its seat in the particular and the passive. For the rest; everything bows to the laws of fatal necessity. The soul which is itself a sensible fire, is not immortal, for it is corporeal;[5] the portion of the universal soul by which it is animated, is confounded in the end with the active principle of the world. The universe itself is to be consumed by fire, but to rise again after the burning.[6]

From this materialistic school of physics, Stoicism derived a severe, but impossible and often illogical system of morality. The fundamental principle of its ethics seems at first sight to belong to the Epicurean school. "We must," says Zeno, "conform ourselves to nature."[7] But to the Epicurean, nature is the active principle; it is reason. To conform oneself to nature, is then always to allow the active and rational principle to rule; it is to rise above the passive; to triumph over all emotion, all suffering, and hence all pleasure also, for pleasure is a passive state of the soul; it is to arrive at insensibility.[8] Virtue is identical with reason; hence it can be taught as a system. It is absolute in its nature; either a man has it or has it not, for the rational principle is one and indivisible.[9] There are no degrees, no shades in the moral

[1] Ritter and Preller, "Hist. phil. ex font.," etc., p. 358.
[2] Ἡ μὲν ἀλήθεια σῶμα. Ibid., p. 364.
[3] Diog. Laert., iii. 34.
[4] Πνεῦμα διῆκον δι' ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου. Ritter and Preller, Op. cit., p. 366.
[5] Diog. Laert., vii. 156.
[6] Ritter and Preller, p. 368.
[7] Ibid., p. 380.
[8] Diog. Laert., viii. 87.
[9] Ibid., 127.

life. Stoicism did not, however, in its initial stage at Athens, assume the severe form which it afterwards adopted in Rome.

The philosophy of the Portico was to undergo in later days a notable purifying process, in which it rallied to itself all the noble souls who desired to rise above the fearful moral degradation of imperial Rome. It was the refuge of noble hearts; but, as we shall see, it failed, with all its severity, to neutralise the deadly consequences of its first principles. It never could rise to a pure spirituality. Denying at once God and immortality, it had no true basis for its morality; referring everything to the *ego*, it was, in spite of its generous assumptions, tainted with an incurable selfishness. Impotent in the sphere of metaphysics, it concentrated its efforts on the practical. It was indeed a powerful protest against the glaring immoralities of paganism, but while it stigmatised, it had no power to arrest the process of moral degeneration.

Neither Stoicism nor Epicureanism had availed to uproot scepticism. Hence it reappeared under a new form, sheltering itself under the name of Plato, and taking up again the chain of the true Socratic tradition. The New Academy, at first led with prudence and moderation by Arcesilaus, soon boldly avowed, through the teaching of Carneades, that all certainty is impossible. Taking up the idea of the Stoics that knowledge comes to us through the senses, Carneades showed without difficulty, that sensation gives us "no absolute criterion of truth, and concluded it is impossible to find such a criterion," and that we must adhere to the probable.[1] Such a principle could only lead to eudemonism, and to this issue Carneades faithfully followed it. Thus philosophy, having abandoned the heights of Platonism, fell back inevitably into scepticism and materialism, and betook itself to the unworthy task of formulating into maxims, the practices of an age of corruption.

If from philosophy we turn to literature, we shall be still more struck with the change passing over the genius of Greece. We feel that it has lost the creative inspira-

[1] Ritter, "History of Ancient Philosophy," vol. iii. p. 614, *et seq.*

tion ; it no longer breathes the vivifying air of liberty, or throws itself with ardour into the struggles of the democracy. Its decadence, therefore, in everything relating to political life, is notorious. The new comedy and the idyll are the only literary forms of any real merit. Menander could depict the vices of private life, and Theocritus celebrate the charms of solitude, without any noble patriotic aspirations ; but these were indispensable to great poetry, and not even the splendid welcome extended by the Museum of Alexandria, to the most eminent representatives of science and letters, could animate the new poets with the divine afflatus of an Æschylus, a Sophocles, or a Pindar. Tragedy is no longer the solemn representation of national myths ; it is a literary exercise, an Academic competition, in which a king confers the prizes. The seven poets of the Pleiades, in spite of their ambitious title, do not rise above mediocrity. They are but erudite declaimers. Epic poetry turns to dissertation, it becomes didactic and scientific. Callimachus of Cyrene does not sing the praise of heroes ; he magnifies causes. Dicæarchus writes a geographical description of Greece ; and Aratus indites a poem upon phenomena. Apollonius of Rhodes vainly tries in his "Argonautica," to invest science with a poetic form ; he but partially succeeds. The scientist stifles the poet, and simplicity, enthusiasm, faith are all wanting. Sometimes poetry crops up, as it were by chance, and we light upon a beautiful verse, a brilliant description ; but calm, cold reflection predominates. The time has not yet come when a new fountain of poetry is to spring up in the barren land—the poetry of sadness illumined with a prophetic dawn. The old world is not yet sufficiently humbled ; it is no longer adding to its wealth, but it is making an inventory of its possessions. It feels a lively satisfaction in reckoning them up ; and this calculating, self-satisfied spirit is the most fatal of all influences to the spirit of poetry. But if poets are rare, grammarians and commentators abound. They fix the canon of the literature of Greece, and carefully determine what are the truly classic works, thus tacitly admitting that the great epoch in the literature of the country is past, and that they and their successors are reduced to

imitating the immortal types of the beautiful, without trying to create new ones. Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus occupy the first rank among critics and grammarians; but while they are very skilful in dissecting great poetry, they have no power to revive it. History alone profits by the new conditions of literary art. Its horizon is widened; it is no longer exclusively national. With Polybius, it begins to enquire into the deeper sequence of cause and effect. Eloquence, on the other hand, steadily dwindles; we catch no longer the nervous and impassioned tones of free discussion among a free people. Oratory becomes hollow and meaningless; it adopts swelling phrases and affects a spurious dignity. Cicero truly characterises it as Asiatic; thus describing in one word its affected greatness and real littleness.

It might be imagined that art would have made real advances since the time of Alexander.[1] Its first contact with the East gave it indeed an added inspiration without perverting it. The Hellenic genius had still vitality enough to hold its own. The Greek artist might be led away by Oriental magnificence, but not so far as to desert the tradition of his native schools. The new order of things inaugurated by the conqueror, was however soon to bring decadence upon all the plastic arts. The artist in the intelligent democracies of Greece, sought to embody in his works, the spirit and the imagination of a nation of artists. It was necessary then that he should rise to an exalted, universal and truly human standpoint; hence the religious and patriotic spirit of his work. This stimulus to truly noble work is lost, when powerful princes become his patrons: henceforward he seeks only to gratify their tastes and pleasures. All the great ideas of Hellenism were expressed by the glorious artists of the time of Pericles. Like their contemporaries, the poets, they had been true to a noble inspiration coming from the very heart of the nation itself. Their successors were versed in all the technical secrets of their art; they handled the chisel with rare skill, but they had no great ideas, especially no religious ideas, to express. Art became a courtesan, and not all

[1] See Otfried Müller, "Archæology," pp. 144—176.

the skilfulness with which she played her part, could efface her moral degradation. She devoted herself to rearing and adorning palaces rather than temples, and had an eye to the brilliant and the useful, as is shown by the building of the cities of Alexandria and Antioch. The Corinthian order of architecture now everywhere displaced the Doric; the mechanical arts received an extraordinary impetus. Chariots and implements of war were lavishly adorned. Sculptors multiplied statues of princes, and carved representations of famous cities in marble. Statues of the gods, as being less profitable, were far less common. The school of Rhodes, founded at this period, produced some masterpieces like the Laocoon and the Toro di Farnese, but even in these, the aiming at effect is very marked, and while true to the lines of beauty, there is something theatrical about them. It is easy to foresee that as inspiration flags, this striving after effect will become more marked, and the further will be the departure from the pure and quiet standard of classic beauty. Precious stones are very elaborately worked in this age of *articles de luxe.* Painting follows in the steps of sculpture; it becomes a trade, and panders to a degenerate taste. Mosaics used in the decoration of palaces, become objectionably prominent. Thus, alike in religion and philosophy, there are signs of decadence, checked and cloaked at first by the brilliance of a refined civilisation, but inevitable under the growing corruption of taste, and the crumbling away of the very foundation of morals in the ancient world. A great event was about to hasten this decline—the conquest of Greece and of the world by Rome, and the establishment of the Empire.

§ II.—Rome before and after the Conquest of Greece. —The Religion of Rome to the Time of Augustus.[1]

While Greece was exhausting her strength in internecine contests, a new power was arising in Italy, which was

[1] In addition to the original sources, we refer the reader to Mommsen's "History of Rome;" and to Victor Duruy, "La Religion romaine d'Auguste aux Antonins;" Preller, "Römische Mythologie;" Boissier, "La religion romaine;" Havet, "Le Christianisme et ses origines," vol. ii.

to become the fortunate inheritor of the conquests of Alexander. It was of humble and obscure origin. Its cradle was a little town of Latium, inhabited by a rude people, a conflux of shepherds and brigands. But this despised people, who amply merited the name of barbarians bestowed on them by the Greeks, possessed a latent force which is the secret of great things and accomplishes the impossible. It had faith in its own destinies, a faith which was indomitable and asserted itself with fresh energy after every reverse. The Roman nation never swerved for a single day from the career of conquest it had set before itself, but pressed on with a perseverance as indefatigable as it was heroic. No victory satisfied its ambition, no defeat daunted its daring. When vanquished, it awaited a return of fortune; when victor it planted its foot a step in advance. Never was the unity and solidarity of many generations of the same nation so strikingly shown; it seems rather like the career of one man animated by one stedfast thought. The work begun by the fathers, was taken up by the sons without hesitation, and without delay, at the point where it had been left. This strong Roman race was as sternly disciplined by the struggles of the democracy as by foreign warfare. Fierce debates between patricians and plebeians fill up every page of the domestic history of Rome, and impart to it that character of strength and severity so characteristic of the genius of the nation. It grew up under a reign of stormy liberty in which the passions were roused to the point of bloodshedding. In the intervals of fighting and of the forum, the Roman finds his recreation in agriculture; he handles the plough as readily as the sword. Hence there is a grand simplicity and austerity about his life, a singular sobriety and seriousness in his demeanour, comparative purity of morals, reverence for the sanctities of the home; but at the same time implacable severity to the conquered and to men of alien race. The Roman of the Republic as has been well said, was a man of equity. He represented law in its inexorable character, and formulated it with incomparable clearness and great practical sense. But he did not understand that having rights, he had also

duties. He looked upon himself as the creator of the human race, as though it belonged to him of legitimate right, and all he had to do was to find proconsuls to work it to advantage. This stern *hauteur* comes out in the language of this conquering race, a language curt as a military order in the thick of the fight, and without a trace of those delicate inflections which lend suppleness to speech, and with which the idiom of Greece abounds. *Festinat ad res.* It is the language of action, quick and keen as a sword. It makes no attempt to describe shades of thought; it defines its ideas in a few sharp lines.

It is easy to understand that the religion of such a people would differ widely from Hellenic paganism. Utterly destitute of the brilliant imagination of the Greek, the Roman had no aptitude in creating poetic myths, in idealising the life of nature, and dramatising its religious conceptions. Intensely practical, rooted as it were to the soil he tilled, and eager to become himself a peasant-proprietor, it took him a long time to get beyond the first stage of naturism, which is hardly distinguishable from the beliefs of savage nations. The most characteristic feature of his religion, before he came under the influence of Greece, was an extraordinary development of that primitive spiritism, which infuses the divine into everything, and makes it the *double* of all natural phenomena. We can indeed trace in it the elementary anthropomorphism which extends and applies the law of the sexes to the great forces of nature, but it never transforms them into living personages like the gods of the Greek Olympus.

The first elements of this early Roman religion came from the primitive cradle of the race, which was only a graft from the Oriental Aryans.[1] It brought from thence the name of its gods, which, as in all cognate religions, personify the great aspects and forces of nature, in the heavens by their solar character, and here on earth by a multitude of gods, associated with all the manifestations of life—family, pastoral, social. The divinity thus subdivided, is not individualised in definite types. It retains

[1] The *dei* are heavenly beings. The word *deus* is allied to the Greek *Zeus*, and to the *Devas* of India.

an abstract character, which is well expressed in the vague appellation *Numen* so common in the Latin tongue.[1]

There were indeed some greater gods towering above the crowd of inferior deities, which are mainly genii or demons worshipped under the name of lares, manes, or penates. The lowest rank is occupied by the *Semones* or *Indigetes*, who present some analogy with the deified heroes of Greece, but without the same grandeur and without exerting sufficient influence on the mythological conception, to vivify and humanise it, as in Greece. This multiplicity of the gods led Varus to distinguish between the certain and uncertain gods, in order to mark how slight and indefinite was the barrier which separated the divinity, properly so called, from the world. Until the time of Numa, the religion of Rome had all the features of a pure naturism, in which the divine is scarcely to be distinguished from natural phenomena. The god Faunus was the apt symbol of this vague fetichism, which deified woods, rivers and fountains, as well as stars.

When the greater gods appear, they are specially distinguished by the domain over which they reign. Sometimes they are assigned a kingdom in the heavens, sometimes upon earth, sometimes in the subterranean regions, where reign the hidden powers which ripen the seeds and guard the dead. We have thus the *Dii superi*, the *Di inferi*, and the terrestrial gods.[2]

All the great deities of the heavens, like Jupiter, Juno, Janus and Diana, owe their origin to celestial phenomena. They represent in the first instance, the sun and moon. Janus is the most Roman of these greater gods; he was called the "god of gods" (*Divum deum*). His name is derived from *dius*, *dium*, in the sense of serene, pure. He is then the true Italian god of the sun. This god of

[1] *Numen* is properly speaking, the manifestation of power, by which any spiritual being whatever reveals itself. The word has so distinctly this sense of a manifestation of *power*, that Titus Livius applies it to the Roman senate. Lucretius says: "*Mentis numen.*" Subsequently we read of the *numen* of Augustus. The very names of the Latin gods indicate their vague character. Thus Janus and Diana, Jupiter and Juno, signify simply the *divine*. *Faunus* and *Fauna* mean the *good*. See Preller, p. 50.

[2] This division is clearly marked in Titus Livius. "*Dii omnes celestes, vosque terrestres, vosque inferni, audite.*" Book i. ch. 22.

the sun keeps the gate of heaven and of the celestial light, opening it every morning and closing it in the evening. He was also called *Quirinus*, a Sabine word probably derived from *quiris*, a lance or spear: He was thus invested with a warlike character, which as much endeared him to the Romans as his radiant and fertilising heat. The closing of the temple of this warrior god was the certain sign of peace.

Jupiter—*Deus pater*—divides the pre-eminence with Juno. He is still more directly the god of light; hence he is also called *Lucetius*. As *Deus fidius* he is the god of plighted faith. He could not but assume a warlike character in the midst of this valiant race. The temple reared to him on the Capitol under the name of *Optimus Maximus*, is the august sign of the pre-eminence that was readily accorded to him. Juno was the goddess of the calends, that is, of the days when the crescent moon reappeared in the heavens. This reappearance of the moon was looked upon as the symbol of birth. Thus Juno was the goddess and guardian of women. It is impossible to determine when Minerva and Apollo really became Roman deities, for we only know them under their Greek form. Not so with Diana, who was an ancient national lunar deity, corresponding to Janus. Sun, moon, stars, winds and storms, were thus objects of worship. Mars is distinctly an Italian god. He is primarily the god of productiveness and of war.[1] In this character, he takes his place side by side with Jupiter Capitolus. As *Mars Campestris* he presides over the field of Mars, and the sports and tournaments there celebrated. Venus also appears to have been a Latin goddess, before she was invested with the brilliant garb of Greek mythology.[2] She first appears under the name of *Feronia* or *Flora*, as goddess of flowers and spring. By a strange paradox she was at the same time the goddess of love and of death.

The tutelary gods of the soil and of agriculture, like the celestial gods, were of both sexes. The principal were Telluna and Tellus, Saturn and Ops. The first rank

[1] The root of the word seems to be *mas*, which designates the male element of generation. Preller, p. 208.

[2] The name Venus comes from the root *ven*, to love, to desire.

belonged to Ceres. These deities presided over the agrarian feasts which play so large a part in the religion of Rome. Ops is the earth, the great mother, and Saturn is her spouse. His name was associated with all the old traditions of prosperity and abundance. His feast was like a return to the age of gold, and for a day all social inequalities were lost sight of.

The foremost of the subterranean gods was Orcus, called the god of death. He reigned over the departed called *manes*, that is to say, the pure and transfigured ones. The *manes* inhabited the deep places of the earth, from which they came forth to wander among men at certain seasons, and always at night. They were apotheosised as *Dei manes*[1]. The secular games were celebrated in honour of these subterranean gods.

The mythology of the sea, says Preller, was altogether subordinate in Italy. Neptune (from *νεω, ναυς*) there played quite a minor part. On the other hand, the river gods, headed by Father Tiber, were the special objects of worship.

Fire was an important element in the religion of Rome, not so much under the form of Vulcan, which represented nature, as under that of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, and consequently the revered centre of the family and of the nation, which was but a wider family. The name of Vesta comes from the Sanscrit *waas*, to inhabit. Her worship was inseparably connected with that of the Penates,[2] the tutelary spirits of the house, who were worshipped in the *atrium* or vestibule. The temple of Vesta in Rome, stood in the Forum, between the Capitoline and Palatine hills, and not far from the temple of the Penates. The *atrium* of Vesta, in which dwelt the Vestal virgins, stood by the side of the temple. It was the office of these Vestals to feed the eternal fire burning on the hearth or altar, as a living symbol of the goddess. An air of simplicity and purity pervaded this whole structure. The Vestals were pledged to perpetual

[1] Preller, p. 316.

[2] The name Penates comes from *penus*, provisions intended for the family meal.

chastity. The Palladium of Troy, to which superstitious notions were attached, was kept in the sanctuary. Vesta was not only the goddess of sacred fire in the city; she was also the goddess of all fires lighted upon altars. Her name was associated with that of Janus in all ceremonials.[1]

After these greater gods, comes the innumerable host of secondary deities, whose common domain is the earth. Preller says: "All phenomena, all events taking place in nature or among men, from birth to death, all the vicissitudes of life and of human activity, all the relations of citizens among themselves, all enterprises are at the instances of these lesser gods."[2] The belief which the Romans held, that there was a spirit enshrined in every material form, was so consistently carried out, that the chain of genii reached from earth to heaven, and included even the gods themselves. Every god had his genius. The word genius (from *gigno*) describes the invisible action of a higher being, taking place wherever life is manifested under any form whatever. The genius does not keep guard over individuals alone, but also over families, cities, nations. In the family, the genius was worshiped as the *genius navalis*—the protecting god of the house. This tutelage was shared by the Lares, the spirits of the deceased members of the family, and the Penates, who were rather the protectors of the house itself than of its inhabitants.

Beyond this, genii peopled the air and the waters. They were divided into good and evil spirits. The Semones or Indigetes were the national genii. They represented the fabulous heroes who had disappeared from the earth in some strange and mysterious manner. Lastly there were the purely abstract divinities called fortune, good faith, honour, virtue, peace, hope, happiness, concord, modesty, equity, providence, not to speak of the gods of healing and of various maladies, including fever. Heroes, whether Greek or Latin, such as Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Ulysses, Æneas, found a place in this crowded pantheon. Rome itself became the most real o all these divinities. "Our country is so thickly peopled

[1] Preller, p. 263.

[2] Ibid., pp. 65, 66.

with gods," says Petronius in his "Satyricon," that it is easier to meet a god than a man."[1]

Nothing could be more bald than this Roman mythology, which is destitute alike of philosophy and poetry. Its prevailing idea is that man is surrounded by a mysterious power which manifests itself in everything. Looked at as a whole, and apart from the greater gods, whose more remote action is of far less concern to their worshippers than that of the myriads of genii close at hand, this divine world is neither absolutely good nor absolutely bad. It is in its power to protect or punish, to help or injure, according as the man conducts himself in relation to it. The most important thing is then to know what is its secret will, so as not to offend it, but so to order the course of the life as to appease it and render it propitious. Hence the important part played in the religion of Rome by sacred divination, the science of auguries, and the minuter ritual of worship.

There is no analogy between the Delphic mysteries which became the living oracle of the national conscience, and this anxious questioning of the Roman augurs into all the signs of the divine will, as shown by the entrails of the victims, the flight of birds and certain meteorological phenomena. "Divination is," as M. Boissier has well said, "a cold, complicated methodical science, which allows no scope for inspiration."[2]

The Roman worship itself is characterised by the driest formalism. The abstract divinities to which it is offered, appeal neither to the heart nor to the conscience. All that the worshipper has to do is to set himself right with them by means of external ritual without moral significance. When this has been observed with the prescribed rigour, there is nothing more to fear. If some favour is to be asked of the god, it is necessary first to enquire which is the proper god to apply to in order to obtain it. This is a question of no small difficulty. But it is as useful to know what god can come to our help, as to have the address of our baker or carpenter in case we have need of him. The god thus invoked must be

[1] Petron., "Sat.," 17.

[2] Boissier, vol. i. pp. 15—17.

addressed by his true name. On this point there is so much uncertainty that even the greatest of them is sometimes apostrophised thus: "O mighty Jupiter, or whatever be the name thou preferrest!" The name of the god having been found, it is further needful to know the exact terms of the prayer to be addressed to him, in order to ensure a favourable reply. The priests are the sacred lawyers to be consulted, for it is their peculiar office to attend to the minutiæ of worship. They have books in which every contingency is provided for. The worshipper does not trust to his memory. He often has two priests beside him; one to dictate the proper formula, the other to follow the book and see that nothing is left out. It is obvious that religious feeling can find little to feed upon in such a ritual. The form is everything. "The gods love purity," says Tibullus. See that thou present thyself therefore in a garment without spot."[1] Roman piety must never overstep the prescribed limits in any direction. All that is superfluous, all that exceeds the due observance, is designated by the significant name *superstitio*—that which goes beyond established rule.

This superstition is to be carefully avoided, for it keeps its subject in perpetual bondage and fear. Cicero says: "I thought I should be doing an immense benefit both to myself and to my countrymen if I could entirely eradicate all superstitious errors. Nor is there any fear that true religion can be endangered by the demolition of this superstition . . . for as this religion which is united with the knowledge of nature is to be propagated, so also are all the roots of superstition to be destroyed. For it presses upon and pursues and persecutes you wherever you turn yourself, whether you consult a diviner, or have heard an omen, or have immolated a victim, or beheld a flight of birds; whether you have been a Chaldean or a soothsayer; if it lightens or thunders, or if anything is struck by lightning; if any kind of prodigy occurs; some of which events must be frequently coming to pass; so that you can never rise with a tranquil mind."[2]

[1] Tibullus, ii. 1, 13.

[2] Cicero, "De Divin." lxxii.

The reason why the Roman religion did not paralyse action and interfere with the historical development of the nation, was the absence of anything like a priestly caste with separate interests and a spirit of domination. The priesthood was not only a lay, but essentially a national institution. Cicero says: "Our forefathers were never wiser, never more truly inspired of the gods than when they decided that the same persons should preside over religion and govern the Republic. By this means both magistrates and priests discharge their duties with discretion, and make it their common concern to guard the safety of the State."[1] Men became augurs or priests, and prætors or consuls, at the same time. As soldiers, politicians, men of business, they brought the same cool practical sense to bear on religious questions as on their worldly affairs. Thus there was never any conflict between religion and the State. Mommsen says: "The clan and the family were not annihilated in the Roman community; but the theoretical as well as the practical omnipotence of the State in its own sphere, was no more limited than by the liberty which the State granted and guaranteed to the burgess. The ultimate foundation of law was in all cases the State; liberty was simply another expression for the right of citizenship in its widest sense."[2]

The State cultus was associated with all that was highest and deepest in the life of a Roman citizen; hence his religion had a far broader basis than any mere calculation of prudence or selfish policy. The fatherland was to him a thing sacred as the family itself; indeed the city was but a larger family. Just as beneath the hearthstone in the house, the ashes of the fathers had been placed and had become the objects of sincere worship; so in the mind of a pious Roman, the ashes of the generations past were associated with the national altar dedicated to Vesta. He believed that his ancestors hovered over the fatherland in the form of beneficent genii. The fatherland was thus in constant communication with the mysterious region where abode the manes of its ancestors, those great puri-

[1] Cicero, "Pro Domo," i.
[2] Mommsen, "History of Rome." Book I. ch. xi. p. 168.

fied beings, who still came to its aid. In this way the earthly fatherland became attached to the heavenly, and the one was served in the service of the other. Rome, herself divine, belonged to both worlds.

This religious character of the fatherland comes out very beautifully in the myth which sets forth the fabulous foundation of Rome. This foundation had assumed in the national legend, the character of a religious act which the Romans tried to reproduce with all its main features, in the feasts commemorative of the great event. We may briefly give the substance of this legend which represented to the Romans the mythical origin of their holy city. "When the great day of the foundation returns, Romulus first offers a sacrifice. His companions are ranged around him. They light a fire of brushwood and each in turn leaps across the flame. The explanation of this is, that for the act about to be performed the people must be pure, and the ancients thought to purify themselves from any physical or moral stain by leaping over the sacred fire.

"When by this preliminary ceremony the people had been prepared for the great act of the foundation, Romulus hollows out a small fosse in a circular form. Into this he casts a clod of earth which he has brought from the town of Alba, the cradle of his ancestry to which their manes were still attached. The object of this part of the ceremony was that, in pointing to the place of his adoption, he might be able to say: 'This is still the land of my fathers, *terra patrum patria*. Here is my fatherland, for here are the manes of my family.' The fosse into which all present had in turn thrown a clod of earth was called *mundus*, a word which in the ancient tongue stood for the region of the manes. From this same place, according to the tradition, the souls of the dead escaped three times in the year, once more for a moment to behold the light. Thus the souls of the ancestors consecrate the site of the new city. Upon this sacred spot, Romulus builds an altar and kindles a fire; and around this altar, as around the family hearth, the city is to grow up. Romulus makes a furrow, which marks the site, using for the purpose a copper ploughshare. His plough is drawn

by a white bull and a white cow. Romulus, with head veiled, according to priestly custom, himself guides the plough, chanting prayers as he goes. The clods of earth turned up by the ploughshare, are thrown within the enclosure, so that no particle of the sacred soil should be left to the foreigner. The boundary line thus drawn is inviolable; it may not be crossed either by stranger or citizen. To jump over this little furrow is an act of sacrilege. Roman tradition says that the brother of the founder committed this sacrilege and paid for it with his life. For entrance and egress, the furrow is interrupted at various points, Romulus having lifted the ploughshare over them. These breaks are called *portæ*, and are the gates of the city. Upon the sacred furrow, or a little behind it, the walls are reared. These also are sacred. They may not be touched, even for repair, without permission from the priest. On either side of the wall a space of a few feet is set apart as sacred soil. This is called *pomœrium*. The plough may not pass over it, nor may it be used for building.

"Such, according to abundant testimony, was the ceremony of the foundation of Rome. It was celebrated every year throughout antiquity on the anniversary known as the natal day of Rome."[1]

The city thus founded was truly a temple, and the fatherland a divine collective being, uniting earth with the sombre realm of shades. As the city was the family magnified, so the family retained all the features of the Roman city. Within the house, as we have seen, the hearth, beneath which the ashes of the fathers had been interred in primitive times, was regarded as the family altar. It was placed under the protection of the manes. The penates were worshipped in the atrium, where hung the portraits of the ancestors.

The great solemnity of family life was the day of burial. Behind the dead walked all the relations, their faces covered with masks more or less resembling the illustrious ancestors, whose memory recalled eminent services rendered to the country. Thus the family gathered around it,

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, "La cité antique," pp. 159—160.

in the funeral ceremony, all its past, all its glory, all that it revered. Upon the tomb it placed these words: *Dei manes*, thus proclaiming the glorification of those whom it mourned. These simple words, everywhere repeated, were a sort of attestation of the immortality of the family and above all of the fatherland.

The whole constitution of the family hinged on this great idea of its perpetuity, as contrasted with the ephemeral life of the individual. It was in order to assure this perpetuity that the right of inheritance was limited to the male members of the family; the women were not even recognised in the family relationship.[1] The power of the father was unduly great, but this was only from excessive care to prevent the intermingling of families. The father alone presided over the sacrifices in the house.

The importance attached to the idea of the fatherland, enhanced the majesty of the law, the administration of which was the special province of the State. Undoubtedly, Roman law was sometimes hard, especially on minors, on women, foreigners and slaves. It was only by slow degrees that it became more tolerant, and it must be confessed that in the process it lost much of its original vigour and austerity. Its great function was still to watch over the Roman city. The statue of Law was worshipped in the open Forum, and near it was the image of plighted Faith, the only sufficient sanction of the social bond. The Roman family long retained its purity. Marriage was held in honour; divorce was rare. The social atmosphere was morally healthy, if somewhat severe. One thing is certain: that nothing did more to animate this valiant race to victorious conflict and indomitable resistance in perilous times, than the worship of the great fatherland, which bound together the present and the past, and the vision of the glorious army of the departed, whose manes encompassed its legions and rendered them invincible. To borrow a Scripture figure, it ran its race, cheered on by a great cloud of witnesses.

The religious festivals were for the most part associated

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, "La cité antique," p. 85.

with the agricultural or warlike pursuits which formed the staple of Roman life, and they were mainly designed to perpetuate the great memories of the nation's history. Benjamin Constant, in his "Polythéisme romain," well says: "All the Roman mythology was not only moral but historic; every temple, every statue, every festival recalled to the Romans some perils from which the gods had saved Rome, some calamity by them averted, some victory won through their watchful care. . . . Each god took some virtue under his or her special protection. Jupiter inspired courage; Venus conjugal fidelity, and the wisest of Roman matrons was chosen to inaugurate her image; Neptune presided over prudent resolutions; Hercules over inviolable vows. Every event in the national history assumed a mythologic form. Juno Sospita (or the saving goddess), was worshipped because she had given the Romans a glorious victory over the Gauls; Jupiter Stator had stopped them in their flight; Jupiter Pistor (the baker) had suggested to the Romans when besieged by the Gauls, that they should throw loaves of bread among the enemies, to make them believe there was an abundance of provision in the city, and so cause them to give up the siege; Castor and Pollux had fought for them. Jupiter Latialis had presided over the union of all the Latin peoples. . . . The name *pontiff* came from the wooden bridge thrown by Ancus Martius over the Tiber, the repairing and keeping of which was entrusted entirely to the priests."[1]

Such was the religion of Rome in the great days of the Republic—a religion essentially earthly and political and consequently little adapted to quicken the deeper aspirations of the soul, or to awaken in the conscience that holy dissatisfaction, which would lead it to seek something higher and better than it had yet either attained or conceived. The steadfast faith in immortality was nevertheless a salutary counterpoise to this proud nationalism.

A great change passed upon the constitution and the spirit of the Roman people, from the time when, having conquered Carthage and become master of Italy, it no

[1] Benjamin Constant, "Le Polythéisme romain," Book I. c. v.

longer found any obstacle in the way of its ambition. The spoils of the newly conquered provinces brought an afflux of wealth to Rome; the ancient simplicity of manners disappeared, and was succeeded by ostentatious display. The middle class from which were drawn the heroic legions which had made Rome the conqueror of the world, began to disappear. In its place arose a corrupt plutocracy, and a crowd of turbulent and imperious beggars ready to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

The conquest of Greece, effected 146 B.C., did more than any other event to hasten the decomposition of ancient society. The contact of two civilisations, so diverse, was equally fatal to both, because each contributed its own quota of corruption. The Roman kept his sternness but without his primitive simplicity; he had become greedy of wealth and pleasure. Suddenly transported into the midst of the most marvellous art-treasures of the world, he was as though intoxicated; and without any true appreciation of their worth, he was eager to appropriate them. But the culture of Greece was less easy to master than her provinces. The precious marbles might be transferred to Rome, but not the graceful art that chiselled them. It was far more easy to borrow her vices and to imbibe the doctrines which justified them, such as those of Epicurus and the sceptics. Greece played in relation to Rome, the part of an intelligent slave, who seeks to govern her master by flattering his passions. She degraded herself more and more in this unworthy attempt, and remained none the less the slave of a tyrant who could never rise to her level. The Roman had a way of repeating the lesson he had caught from his Greek slave, but repeating it in such a way as completely to change its nature. The poetic mythology of Greece, transplanted to Rome, lost all its ideal character. It became materialistic, and its whole spirit was changed. We shall see how very low humanism sank in the following period.

Ennius and Livius Andronicus essay to give us in Roman literature a copy of the Greek; but their hand is too heavy to reproduce the fresh and gracious colouring of the original. The genius of Rome only shines at this period in the domain of comedy, with Plautus and Terence

Satire alone seems to flourish in this intermediate phase, when new customs come into conflict with old national traditions. Greek artists flock into Rome, bringing with them the peculiar elegance and charm of their manner; but they have to work for the oppressors of their father-land, hence they have lost their highest inspiration. The radiance of the world's great art-era still lingers about their works nevertheless. Rome is embellished by them and their disciples; and the march of luxury goes on.

CHAPTER II.

THE PAGAN WORLD AT THE COMING OF CHRIST.[1]

§ I.—Religion under Augustus.

IN the rapid glance we propose now to take at the pagan world at the coming of Christ, we shall not restrict ourselves wholly to the century in which He appeared. There can be no doubt that the peculiar moral and religious condition which characterised the first century of the Christian era, began in the preceding period of the Roman Republic, and was prolonged into the second century, that is to say up to the commencement of the great contest between the new religion and Greco-Roman paganism.

The salient feature of this very remarkable period is the contrast between a brilliant state of civilisation, and an ever-deepening deterioration of political, moral, social, and family life. On the one hand we observe a certain softening of manners; on the other, new and abominable moral pollution. On the one hand, a purification of the human ideal; on the other, a ruthless despotism changing the character of class-relations through every grade of life. On the one hand, the development of a noble philosophy, not merely theoretical but practical in its aims; on the other, the demonstration of its utter failure, as given by the inconsistencies of its best representatives. On the one hand, in the religious sphere, an ever-growing scepticism; on the other, a craving so

[1] For the close of the Roman Republic, see *Mommsen*, "History of Rome;" *Duruy*, "Histoire des Romains," vol. iii.; *Boissier*, "La religion sous Auguste," vol. i.; *Havet*, "Origine du Christianisme," vol. ii.; *Renan*, "Les Apôtres, ch. x. The great authority is of course the literature of the period, and to this we shall constantly refer.

strong and universal to believe something, that any alien religion, any base superstition, could find a following.

In every sphere of life there is a perception and appreciation of the good, the true, the progressive; but as soon as the hand is put out to grasp the shining benison it vanishes, only leaving on the horizon a lingering prophetic gleam. In this twilight hour, when lights and shadows so strangely cross and blend, the pagan world might well take as its motto the deep saying of one of its representatives: *Video meliora, deteriora sequor.*

"The good seems at times quite clear, quite close to me. I am just about to grasp it, when lo, my hands close upon emptiness, and having failed to find the better, I fall back into the worse." Thus is fostered a longing, becoming ever more intense, after a true renovation, a longing full of sadness that expresses itself in unutterable groanings, at least in those noble souls which have not allowed the floods of sensuality to quench the sacred fire within. They cannot calmly accept the sense of failure in their lives; it only makes them the more eager for the mysterious deliverance, of which they find the sure intuition in their own hearts.

We have now reached the concluding term of this long quest of the unknown God, so unremittingly pursued by the heathen world.

The vastness of the Roman dominion, which at this time extended to the extreme East, did much to confirm this attitude of mind. The religious ideas which had gained the ascendancy in distant countries, ceased to be localised, and became diffused generally in the atmosphere. The Roman conquest produced a synthesis of all gods, and of all beliefs; it created a sort of Pagan universalism, in which the elements of all the national religions were indistinguishably blended.

Strange to say, this decomposition of the old national religions was greatly hastened by the repeated and vigorous attempts made by the political power to maintain and re-establish them. As it was utterly incompetent to regenerate the heart, this attempt to enforce beliefs by statecraft only made them totter the more rapidly to their fall, since it brought out in glaring relief the con-

tradiction between the semblance and the reality, between the official religion and the true state of the heart and life. This contradiction was quickly demonstrated in the sphere of morals. It was found no more possible to make men moral by decree, than to restore religion by the arm of the State.

We have seen how rude a shock the old Roman religion in its stern simplicity, received on its first contact with Greek civilisation, which had itself outlived its age of faith and idealism. At that time its governing classes, conscious themselves of the inroads of scepticism, insisted all the more upon the necessity of maintaining by authority the national religion, openly declaring, with Polybius, that the strange and complicated rites of the Roman cultus had only been invented for the populace. The great pontiff Quintus Scævola said ninety years before Christ, that there were two religions; the one intelligent and philosophical, the other unintelligent and traditional; the one not adapted to the State, the other the State religion, and bound to remain in the form in which tradition had cast it. The substance of Varro's teaching in his satirical commentaries on religion is, that the State is older than its gods, as the painter is older than his picture. If it had to be made over again it might be done better, but since religion exists as an institution, it behoves every good citizen to confess and worship the gods of his country, and it is especially binding on men of low degree to pay them homage. Mommsen truly observes that "the State religion of Rome was on all sides recognised as an institution of political convenience, and in this aspect was indeed indispensable, because it was just as impossible to construct the State wholly without religious elements, as to discover any new State religion adapted to form a substitute for the old; but public opinion maintained an attitude essentially indifferent to it." [1]

The great attempt to restore religion by means of the civil power was made by Augustus. This was the leading idea of his policy, from the time that his authority was

[1] Mommsen, "History of Rome," vol. iv. Book V. chap. xii. p. 559.

once firmly established. Like the framer of the Concordat of 1802, he set himself to restore the disused altars, from a conviction that this was the surest means to confirm his own power, and to give coherence to his system of government. He ostentatiously displayed on all occasions his respect for religion, rebuilt the temples and restored the ancient usages. As consul he caused eighty-six temples to be rebuilt. At the same time he instituted new modes of worship which were only in truth a reproduction of the old under new names. Such was the worship of *Venus Victrix*, of *Mars Ultor*, "the Avenger," and of *Apollo Palatinus*. In order to give splendour to this restoration of religion, he caused it to be accompanied by the repetition, with extraordinary pomp, of the secular games, which had been instituted under the Republic in order to avert by special ceremonials, a threatened visitation of the plague. The whole of Augustus' religious policy is summed up in this saying of Mæcenas: "Honour the gods according to national custom: and compel others to honour them likewise."[1] Among the many gods whose worship he thus established, Augustus did not forget himself, though he used many precautions in preparing his own apotheosis. It was from the priestly language that he borrowed the name of Augustus, of which Virgil says that he who bears it becomes a sort of present and corporeal god.

In the Year of Rome 724, Augustus obtained the right to dispose at his pleasure of the priesthood. The senate had appointed solemn prayers to be offered for him throughout the empire on January 3rd. Soon it seemed not enough to pray *for* him; prayers were offered *to* him instead. Temples were raised to him and to the goddess of Rome. The Emperor feigned some scruple about allowing these temples to himself to be built in the capital of the empire, but he sanctioned everywhere the adoration of the imperial Lares, thus assuming the character of those family deities so dear to the Romans, as nearer to them than any others. In the municipal provinces, brotherhoods were multiplied under the name of *Augustuli*,

[1] See M. Boissier on "La religion romaine sous Auguste," vol. i. Book I.

and these, in their public feasts, worshipped the genius of the Emperor. On the death of Augustus, this worship of the Emperor was established by a decree of the senate. This apotheosis of the Cæsars did more than anything else to dishonour and discredit the national religion, although the profanation grew directly out of one of the fundamental ideas of the old religion, which had always deified the dead and venerated ancestors as tutelary gods.[1]

It may be observed that the very eagerness of Augustus, manifested in all his domestic policy, to derive advantage for himself from the restoration of religion, was a hindrance to his success. A certain section of the Roman aristocracy, disheartened by national calamities and by the gloomy aspect of things, was indeed ready to fall back *faute de mieux*, upon the past; just as after the French Revolution the nation forsook Voltaire for the "*génie du Christianisme.*" But the base adulation of himself, which Augustus encouraged, compromised his attempted religious renovation, by making its political character too evident. It was well-known moreover by his associates, that he did not truly believe in the old gods. Lastly, the contradiction was too flagrant between his private life and the moral reforms which he enforced by edict, the senate having committed to him the control of public morals. The monarch who issued edicts against adultery, himself lived in the practice of it. He divided his favours between the wives of Mæcenas and of Livy. The gates of his palace stood open, it was well-known, to women of ill fame. Dion Cassius observes that neither of the consuls who gave their names to the law against celibacy, was married. Horace, the pontifical poet of the secular games, was well-known to be an Epicurean. Ovid spoke as a true representative of the libertines and avowed sceptics associated in the religious reforms of Augustus, when looking back on his erotic poems, as he was about to begin his "Fasti" (a sort of poetical Roman calendar, with its appropriate festivals and mythology), he exclaimed: "Who would have thought that I should ever come to this!"

[1] Boissier, "La religion romaine sous Auguste," i. p. 144.

It is easy to forecast the future of a religious restoration like this, which was but a gigantic political fraud.

§ II.—Social and Moral Condition of the Greco-Roman World at this Period.

The social and moral condition of the Roman world at this period, is the best proof of the fallacy of the so-called restoration of religion. But the aspirations after a higher life were not thus to be stultified. Noble souls could but be shocked and saddened by the grovelling realities of existence in the imperial city, the focus of all the light of the past, the inheritor of all the culture of the ancient world. Their aspirations were fostered alike by the evil and the good, which presented themselves side by side in such striking contrast, through every grade of social life in the city.

For the present, we shall only describe in broad outline, the state of the Roman world at the time of which we speak, not dwelling in any detail on the moral condition of pagan society, when it was first brought into contact with Christianity.

The life of Rome at the close of the Republic and the commencement of the Empire was one of great luxury and splendour. The houses, Seneca tells us, were gorgeous with gilding; crowds of slaves sumptuously arrayed, moved about the streets; wealth was displayed even in holes and corners.[1] The public edifies were still more splendid than the private dwellings. In each of the fourteen wards of Rome, temples and aqueducts abounded. There were hundreds of statues in the public squares. The Forum was surrounded with two porticoes of columns richly sculptured, beneath which the people paraded their *dolce far niente.* The public baths were adorned with pictures and valuable mosaics, and paved with marbles from Alexandria. Hot and cold water was supplied through silver taps.[2] The circuses were equally magnificent. Caligula went so far as to have the floors

[1] "Divitiis per omnes angulos dissipatis." Seneca, "De Tranquill. Anim.," c. i.

[2] Seneca, Ep., lxxxvi.

sprinkled with gold dust.[1] Rome was emphatically the royal residence of the ruling people of the world. The imperial city gave forth, as Pliny says, so brilliant a light, that it was like another sun risen upon the earth. Life there was one succession of festivities, alternating between the Campus Martius, the Circus and the Forum.

This life of pleasure was, however, strangely precarious. The people of Rome lived, not by work, but by doles. All arts, all trades were given up to slaves; while the slave himself was fed and amused by his master. Rome drew its sustenance from Egypt, and its life, as Tacitus says, was entrusted to the chances of the sea.[2] The fortune of the rich was heavily taxed and soon swallowed up by the enormous expense of living. The population began to dwindle to an alarming extent. The family spirit disappeared; men were no longer willing to marry. Italy which has now a population of 17,000,000, had then at the most only 10,000,000. Thus even from an external point of view, this much admired civilisation was only a brilliant cloak concealing national decrepitude. Under such conditions it is not difficult to imagine what it was from a political and moral standpoint.

Historians who, like Goethe, are full of admiration of the greatness of the Empire, or who, like Renan, dwell laudatorily on its tolerance of liberty of thought, forget at what price these benefits were purchased. The imperial rule was a terrible *fiasco* for a community which had sacrificed everything to the public weal. Slavery gilded with glory, as it was under Augustus, could not but appear to every high-minded citizen, an irreparable misfortune, in spite of all that was said of the majestic peace of Rome.[3] From slavery to meanness there is but one step, and it was soon taken. Except during the short period of the Antonines, Rome cringed beneath a domination

[1] Suetonius, "Caligula," 18.

[2] "Navibus et casibus, vita populi Romani permissa est." Tacitus, "Annals," xii. 43.

[3] Titus Livius, in the Preface to his history, says of Rome, that it could neither bear its ills nor the remedies that might have cured them. Propertius says: "I see Rome, proud Rome, perishing the victim of her own prosperity" (iii. 13). *Nec se Roma ferens*, says Lucan (i. 12). See Boissier, vol. i. p. 241.

that was at once ignominous, stupid and cruel. If individual citizens were able, by keeping in prudent and dignified retirement, to avoid the degradation of sycophancy for themselves, they had nevertheless to look on at the hideous spectacle of the humiliation of Rome, and to see, as Tacitus says, consuls, knights, and senators, girding on in hasty and ignoble rivalry, the garb of the bondsman.[1]

We feel as we read this stern historian, what indignation, shame and bitterness filled the hearts of those who had not sunk to the same depth of servility. Tacitus has not only graven in ineffaceable lines the odious features of most of the Cæsars; he has drawn the likeness of the degenerate Romans who tolerated them, and who, while they were capable indeed of assassinating them, had not the courage to deal a deathblow to the institution which they represented. He shows us the Romans of this time, with faces white with terror, ready to turn informers or executioners to save their own lives, and receiving every affront of the tyrant with words of sickening adulation.

Nobly as Tacitus vindicates the human conscience, and boldly as he brands the wrong done to it, he has no faith in the future. He has the soul of a Scipio in the Rome of Nero and Vitellius. He utters his immortal protest against tyranny, but with the hopelessness of one who knows it is utterly unavailing.

The social status was on a par with the political. The middle classes had almost disappeared. Their place was taken by an idle multitude, greedy of gross pleasures, and surrounding the Emperor, whoever he might be, with as many partisans as he would make parasites. Their number was constantly recruited from the ranks of the slaves. We shall see presently what had become of the Roman family, as an institution, and the place assigned in it to women, children and slaves. For the present we need only note the frightful deterioration of morals at this period. We are ready to admit, with M. Renan, that there were noble exceptions to this degradation, due to a certain theoretic development of the moral and social

[1] Tacitus, "Annals," i. 7.

idea.[1] The good reached a higher level than ever before, but they formed only an infinitesimal minority. They were better than those who went before them, but at the same time the bad were worse, and they carried the day.[2]

It would be impossible to paint in too glaring colours the moral degradation of Rome at this time. Without going into any detail, we shall merely indicate what was most characteristic of the age. Those who desire to study closely its moral infamy, have only to read the pages of Juvenal, the Tacitus of private life. The woman was the rival of the man in licentiousness.[3] Too often even patrician women were so shameless in their sensuality, that not content with lovers of their own rank, they sought them among the lowest of the people, among slaves and gladiators.[4] Sometimes women were even seen fighting in the arena.[5] Juvenal, in a striking passage, pictures for us in one stroke, the degradation of woman in his day, when he describes her as passing with a cynical smile the altar of modesty.[6] Clement of Alexandria draws the pagan woman with a more chaste hand, but the idea which he gives us in his "Pædagogue," accords perfectly with the sixth Satire of Juvenal. Sumptuously arrayed, painted, and bathed in perfumes, she is not content to have indecent pictures adorning the walls of her dwelling,[7] she has them reproduced even upon her shoes.[8] She lives in a world of sensuous indulgence, listening to idle and foul gossip, taking counsel with old procuresses, surrounded with jesters and rare birds. Sometimes she is borne through the town on a litter, and repairs to the public baths or to the shops frequented by idlers. She passes

[1] Renan, "Les Apôtres," p. 731.

[2] It is this contrast which M. Havet constantly forgets in his attempt to show that really Christianity gave the world nothing new. Even admitting (which we are not prepared to do) that it did not expand and purify the moral ideal of the very best, it certainly raised the whole tone of society, as no other system had been able to do.

[3] "Virorum liçentiam æquaverunt," Sen.

[4] "In extrema plebe," Petron., "Satyr.," c. 126. Tacitus, "Annals," xii. 53.

[5] "Sævit et ipsa Venus." Martial, i. 19.

[6] Juvenal, Satire vi.

[7] Clement of Alex., "Pæd.," ii. 47.

[8] Ibid., ii. 23.

the night in riotous festivities often ending in drunkenness. She seems the very personification of adultery. Thus this elegant woman, "girt like Venus with a golden girdle of vice," hides beneath a brilliant appearance, her shameless inward corruption, "like one of those Egyptian temples, outwardly imposing, but concealing in the depths of their sanctuary, a hideous thing in the likeness of a god."[1]

As to the vices of the man, it would be, as the Apostle says, "a shame even to speak of them." Unnatural vice, that plaguespot of Hellenic paganism, developed itself in Rome without let or hindrance. All classes of society were tainted with it. As lust is always associated with cruelty, so Rome under the Empire became a scene of debauchery and murder, not to be surpassed by any of the atrocities of the old nature-religions. Delight in bloodshed is characteristic of the whole imperial era. Hence the popularity of the games in the Circus, in which the blood of the gladiators flowed in torrents. Nor could these victims suffice; soldiers and even centurions were forced into the arena.[2] The sight of death seemed to afford the highest pleasure. The writers of the day openly recognise the corrupting influence of the Circus.[3] "In the Circus," says Seneca, "there are as many vices as men. It is a den of iniquity. That which is vile is made so familiar to the people, and so takes possession of all hearts, that innocence is not only rare, it is extinct."[4]

There is one feature of the corruption of the time which deserves to be noted, namely a feverish unrest; revealing the profound moral misery of men. Benjamin Constant says truly that earth cut off from heaven, seems to man a prison, and that he is for ever beating his head against the bars of his cell.[5] This thought, suggested by the spectacle of imperial Rome, explains the tendency—then so general—to carry everything to excess, both in lust and in luxury. When the immortal soul has lost the faith

[1] "Pæd.," iii. 2, 4.
[2] Tacitus, "Annals," xiii. 44.
[3] Pliny the Younger, "Epist.," xv. 22.
[4] "Ut innocentia non rara, sed nulla sit." Seneca, "De Ira," ii. 8.
[5] Benjamin Constant, "Du polythéisme romain."

which opens to it the higher and ideal world, it goes in quest of the infinite in this lower sphere, where it is not to be found. It seeks it in the life of the senses, and failing to find it by legitimate means, it has recourse to the illegitimate and abnormal. Hence a false and excessive refinement; a blending of the pseudo-sublime and the bizarre in amusement and in art, an incessant aiming at the impossible in material things. "It is the aim of luxury," says Seneca, "to triumph over the impossible, and not only to eschew what is reasonable, but to attempt the exact opposite. Is it not contrary to nature to desire to have roses in the midst of winter, and to plant fruit trees on the top of towers? Is it not contrary to nature to lay the foundations of public baths in the middle of the sea?"[1] Heliogabalus was actuated by the same craving for the impossible when he would have served upon his table, dishes of the tongues of peacocks and nightingales; when he insisted on having snow-covered mountains in the midst of green gardens, and on changing night into day in his palaces.[2] Suetonius says of Caligula, that he desired nothing so much as that which he was told was impracticable, such as the construction of dykes in the most dangerous seas, the lowering of mountains and raising of plains.[3] The Roman world was at heart consumed with *ennui*. "It was," says Seneca again, "like the Homeric hero who now stood, now sat in the restlessness of disease. It was shaken with the agitation of a soul no longer master of itself."[4] This old world was suffering not so much from the shocks it had undergone, as from a boundless satiety and weariness of life. Like all *blasé* souls, it said with Petronius, "I care not to secure at once the object of my desires. The birds of Africa please me, because they are not easy to obtain."[5] This disease is well described by Seneca as "*vitæ communis fastidium*."[6]

[1] "Hoc est luxuriæ propositum gaudere perversis." Sen., Epist. cxxii.
[2] Histor. August. Heliogab, xix.
[3] "Nihil tam efficere concupiscebat quam quod posse effici negaretur." Suet., Calig., xxxvii.
[4] Seneca, "De Tranquill. Anim.," ii. c. 17.
[5] "Quod non sunt faciles." Petron., Satyr.
[6] Seneca, Ep. cxxxii.

This is the bitterness which as Lucretius has said, flows from the very fountain of pleasures.[1] Satiated with all that he has seen, as well as with all that he possesses, the voluptuary exclaims scornfully: "For ever the same thing!"[2] In the hope of discovering some new joy, he does violence to nature. But monotony and satiety follow him still, and at length he plunges desperately into the mire. He abandons himself to the most hideous gluttony, and lays earth and sea under tribute to supply his groaning table. He seeks the remedy in the very exaggeration of the evil. Only crime is sufficiently thrilling to charm away his *ennui*, and as Tacitus says, the greater the infamy, the wilder the delight.[3] The same writer describes a suicide, the sole motive of which was disgust of living in such times.[4]

This suicide of a citizen was typical of the moral suicide of a world. Rome, to borrow the figure of an unknown author, was like a gladiator who, after having overcome all his adversaries, turns his sword at last against himself. Thus had vanished that calm, that *ataraxia* of the ancient world, on which Greece had so prided herself. The pagan life began in a poetic feast, to the tones of inspired lyres, and ended in an orgy. The feeling was abroad that it was an age of death. Juvenal declares that the times in which he lives are worse than the iron age, and he exclaims in accents of despair: "The earth no longer brings forth any but bad men and cowards. Hence God, whoever he is, looks down, laughs at them and hates them."[5]

Literature, after its golden age under Augustus, faithfully reproduces this melancholy state of society. Seneca (Epist. cxiv.) eloquently complains of the corruption of language, the inevitable result, as he deems, of the corruption of morals. This lowering of the tone of literature certainly did not arise from any lack of interest in it, for it was never more sought after. "It is characteristic of an effete and sterile age," says Pliny the Younger, "to

[1] Lucretius, iv. v. 33.
[2] "Quousque eadem." Sen., De Tranquill. Anim., ii.
[3] "Magnitudo infamiæ novissima voluptas." Tacitus, Annals, xi. 26.
[4] Ibid., vi. 26.
[5] "Ergo Deus quicumque adspexit, ridet et odet." Juvenal, Satire xiv.

give to letters an amount of attention that increases in proportion to the withdrawal from active life. We find our joy and solace in letters."[1] Thus literature becomes divorced from the national life, and is regarded merely as a *jeu d'esprit*, the amusement of men of leisure. The affectations of such a literary school can only be escaped by an energetic protest against the spirit of the times, such as was made by Juvenal and Tacitus. The only way to achieve real literary merit, is by striking out a path in direct opposition to the accepted canons of the day. It may truly be said of all the great writers of this period, that indignation made them orators or poets. But even in their indignant protest they fell under the influence of their contemporaries. The language they use, whatever the purport of their writings, is no longer the classic tongue, harmonious and stately. Antithesis abounds, and in every line the striving after effect is apparent. Such a writer as Tacitus, indeed, rises by virtue of his rare genius and noble heart, to a degree of distinction in which he no longer belongs to one age or country, but is one of the recognised organs of humanity at large. Pliny the Younger, on the contrary, is altogether the man of his age. As a writer he is acute and able, carefully avoiding all extremes, but not censuring any.[2] He is as much a courtier as a philosopher. His only enthusiasm is for literature. He has his tablets always in his hand—at the chase or on his walks—that he may note down every inspiration as it comes, and fix at once in his words every happy turn of thought that occurs to him. It is said he had the courage to go on reading Livy at Pompeii during the great eruption of Vesuvius.[3]

Eloquence came to be regarded more and more as merely a frivolous art of the rhetors; and the fine arts generally shared the fate of literature. Under Augustus, Trajan and the Antonines, the public monuments are of a noble and imposing character. But the various orders of architecture are soon confused; ornamentation becomes excessive, sculpture colossal, painting obscene. Petronius

[1] "Est gaudium et solatium in litteris." Pliny the Younger, Ep., viii. 19.
[2] Pliny the Younger, Book ix. Ep. xxxvi.
[3] Book vi. Ep. xx.

himself laments the decay of the fine arts, which, forsaking the nobler traditions of the past, pander to the vices of a corrupt age.[1]

If art, however, reflects only too faithfully the pitiful aspects of imperial Rome, it also expresses its aspirations. This is particularly noticeable on the sarcophagi. Here we find the utterance of that longing for a palingenesis, which stirred the heart of the world at this time. The subjects represented are taken chiefly from the mythical stories of Ceres and Bacchus. The myth of Eros and Psyche is often treated in an admirable manner. It is evident that the artist is expressing the sorrow of the soul deprived of the true love.[2] The Oriental element becomes more and more prominent. Everything relating to the worship of Mithra is a favourite subject of art. A pantheistic tendency prevails; the artist condescends to seek inspiration from India and Egypt. Sometimes he even stoops to devise amulets to meet the demands of popular superstition. Thus all the paradoxes of this transitional age are reproduced in the domain of art.

§ III.—Religion and Philosophy after the Augustan Age.

It is easy to conceive what religion would be in such a state of society. The deterioration which we have observed in the previous period, becomes more and more marked. The juxtaposition of all the gods of the world in the Roman pantheon, imperils all. If they had really possessed the intelligence with which popular superstition credited them, they would have found it even more difficult than did the augurs, to look in each other's faces without laughing, for the very coexistence of so many supreme gods was fatal to the authority of each. That mysterious voice, which according to the poetic legend given by Plutarch, sent far over the sea the mournful cry, "Great Pan is dead," was a voice that came from the depths of men's hearts. It was the voice of an age of unbelief proclaiming the end of paganism.[3] The oracles

[1] Petronius, "Satyr.," c. 88.
[2] See Otfried Müller, "Archæol.," p. 241.
[3] Plutarch, "De oraculis," 12.

were silent. "They are no more as formerly," says Plutarch again; "in all the sacred groves, silence and sadness reigns." It would be a mistake to attribute this decline of Hellenic paganism wholly to the progress of philosophy. It was also largely promoted by the inroads of Oriental paganism. Two currents were carrying along the minds of men; on the one hand was the current of impiety, on the other that of superstition. Let us try to analyse the contrary elements thus at work.

We may remark in the first place, that the official, national religion no longer satisfied any. It had sunk too low. Humanism issued in the adoration of the Emperor. The official god "who with a nod and a frown governs earth and sea, and commands peace or war,"[1] is the Emperor—too often a mere pseudonym for a madman, a play actor, or a monster, or perchance all these in one. The god is sometimes Caligula, "the most cruel of masters, after having been the most servile of slaves;[2] sometimes Nero, "who never neglected the performance of a single crime."[3] To-day it might be an imbecile old man like Claudius, to-morrow a sanguinary buffoon like Commodus, of whom it was said that he was a mass of moral pollution.[4] The apotheosis of the imperial god must not be deferred till his death had cast its softening veil over his frivolities. Augustus had indeed been allowed to draw his last breath, before the temple begun for Jupiter,[5] was dedicated to the Emperor; but the successors of Augustus claimed to be worshipped during their life. Suetonius tells us that Caligula caused some of the finest statues of antiquity to be mutilated that they might be surmounted by his bust, so that his head might be worshipped instead of the god's.[6] This act of sacrilege faithfully represents the transformation of humanism, which, after having had as its symbol, the Jupiter Olympus of Phidias, now accepted as its substitute, the hideous bust of Caligula. Such servile apotheoses were indefinitely multiplied; the pro-

[1] Pliny, "Panegyr.," 197.
[2] Suetonius, "Caligula," 10.
[3] Tacitus, "Annals," xiv. 31.
[4] "Omni parte corporis polluta." Hist. Aug., v.
[5] Suetonius, "Augustus," 60.
[6] Ibid., "Caligula," 22.

vinces deified their proconsuls in the hope of being a little less ground down and pillaged by them.[1]

Hadrian built temples to the beautiful youth Antinoüs, the object of his vile passion; statues of him were set up in almost every part of the world, and oracles were delivered in his name.

Thus the idea of deity was being perpetually lowered. The old gods, who in the golden age of Greece had been invested with a certain majesty, quickly fell from their pristine elevation, and were placed on the same low level as the host of newly made gods. The Roman Emperors felt themselves at home in this degraded Olympus. The temple of Venus at Corinth was kept by a thousand courtesans, and young girls who valued their purity were advised to avoid the temple of Jupiter. We can judge how low was the idea entertained of these gods, by the prayers addressed to them, by means of which, says the satirist Persæus, the worshippers thought to purchase their favour and connivance.[2] They dared not have uttered aloud the prayers they thus whispered in the ear of their gods, for they often sought the gratification of some guilty passion or the possession of unlawful goods. If then there is venal justice upon earth, it is only an imitation of the venality of the gods.[3] So far from making man better, they only make him a cringing coward.[4] Whenever a prince commits a crime, it may be safely predicted that he will render solemn thanks to the gods.[5] The conduct of the priests further helps to discredit the gods they represent. Their morals are atrocious, and the people begin to see through their knavish tricks, and to jeer at their idle pretensions to inspiration.[6]

Unbelief and impiety must needs thrive in such an atmosphere. Cicero had already said, when speaking of the old mythology: "Thinkest thou I am fool enough to

[1] "Templa etiam proconsulibus decerni." Suetonius, Aug., 52.
[2] See the whole of the second Satire of Persæus.
[3] Apulius, "Met," ii. 36.
[4] Ibid., 18.
[5] Tacitus, "Annals," xiv. 64.
[6] "Doloso vaticinandi furore." Petron., Satyr., c. 1.

believe in all these fates?"[1] "Who now believes in Hippocentaurs and Chimeras? Or what old woman is now to be found so weak and ignorant as to stand in fear of those infernal monsters which once so terrified mankind?"[2] Vespasian exclaimed in the moment of death: "Woe is me! I am about to become a god." If in the time of Cicero, unbelief had run to such lengths, we may imagine what it became in the two following centuries. As fast as the new gods were made, the old ones were done away with. It was but a step from the apotheosis of a Cæsar to the degradation of an Olympian god. If it took so little to make a new god, might it not well be argued that the old ones had no better title to respect? When once the element of poetry and idealism was eliminated from the old mythology, the gods were no longer anything more than men of corrupt lives.

This incredulity was not confined to the cultured classes; it spread through all grades of the people. Whenever any great calamity occurred, the people tore down the altars and sometimes even cast out the penates upon the highway.[3] At the time of the destruction of Pompeii there arose from the crowd of fugitives, voices declaring that there were no gods.[4] Yet through all this impiety there ran an under-current of superstition, which by the following period had acquired such force as to lead to a vigorous attempt to restore ancient paganism. "Superstition," says Cicero, "pursues and presses on its victim. The meeting with a priest, the sight of a sacrifice, the hearing of an oracle, the flight of a bird, the flash of lightning, the rolling of thunder, any of these suffices to arouse its terrors."[5] This superstition often assumes the character of gross fetichism. Many men imagined that it was possible by magic arts, in some way to imprison the gods in their statues.[6] We know to what a large extent magic

[1] Cicero, "Tusc.," i. 6.
[2] "De Natura Deorum," ii. 2.
[3] "Subversæ deorum aræ, lares a quibusdam in publicum abjecti." Suetonius, Caligula, v.
[4] "Plures nusquam jam deos ullos interpretabantur." Pliny the Younger, Ep., vi. 20.
[5] "Instat enim et urget." Cicero, De Superstitione, ii.
[6] Apuleius, "Met.," i. 15.

arts were practised, and with what avidity the pseudo-marvellous was accepted. The magicians and priests took advantage of this credulity for their own ends. They pretended to have charms by which they could bring heaven down to earth and *vice versa*, dry up fountains, evoke the manes of the dead, resist the powers of the gods, put out the stars and kindle the flames of Tartarus."[1] Thessalia was the native soil of magic from whence it spread far and wide. This devotion to magic arts was perfectly natural in an age of pantheism, when the only deities worshipped were the forms of nature under various names. It arose also out of the longing for salvation, for deliverance which, however dimly realised, was agitating men's hearts. All the old gods had been found wanting. Now the only hope was in the unknown, and chiefly in the hidden powers of the mysterious goddess Isis, who contained in herself the principle of universal life.[2]

It was this same aspiration after the unknown which inclined the minds of men to foreign superstitions. Contemporary writers give abundant testimony to the introduction of new forms of worship which were the more sought after in proportion to their strangeness. Tacitus, the representative of the old Roman spirit, bitterly complains of these innovations.[3] The new religions had a special attraction for women and children.[4] Strangely enough it was in the direction of ancient Egypt and the East that eyes were now turned. The Jews, who up to this time had been held in abhorrence, now made many proselytes, and the Emperors were obliged to pass decrees against them. Claudius positively forbade the introduction of foreign superstitions and a decree of proscription was passed upon the Jews in Rome. Such arbitrary measures were, however, powerless to check the current that had set in in the minds of men.

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[1] Apuleius, "Met.," i. 49.

[2] "Never," says Havet, "did the religious fever burn more fiercely than in the times of the Cæsars, because never was humanity so thoroughly despairing of itself." Vol. i. p. 77.

[3] "Externæ superstitiones valescunt." Tacitus, Annals, xi. 15.

[4] Plutarch, "Conjug. Præcept.," 119.

The worship of Serapis and of Isis, of Cybele—the great mother—and of the Asiatic Aphrodite became general, and bears evidence at once to the corruption of the times, and to its religious necessities. In connection with the worship of the "great mother" were certain solemn purifications called *Taurobolicæ*, which consisted in sprinkling the entire person with the blood of a bull. No expiation was of so much virtue as this, and he who had performed it might transmit its benefits to his neighbours, to his native city, and even to the Emperor himself.[1]

This eager desire to try new modes of worship, this look of hope turned towards the East, and especially towards Judæa, indicates that a great crisis was at hand. Suetonius says: "The idea has spread through the East, that it was decreed by the fates, that the dominion of the world was to pass to men sprung from Judæa."[2] This idea must have travelled into the East from the West. How else can we account for this singular turning of the minds of men at this time towards the Jews? Be this as it may, however, the same *ennui* which led the Romans under the Empire to try and drown the sense of satiety in the wildest excesses of luxurious living, also opened the way for these foreign superstitions. With all their old beliefs shattered, yet still athirst for truth, the Romans were ready to knock at every door, to try every fresh form of religion. Any one who brought anything new was welcome. Every religious charlatan found ready dupes. This explains the singular fortune of Apollonius of Tyana, of whom Philostratus has given us so full an account.[3] He was born at the close of the first century, and was set up as the rival of Jesus Christ, by some enemies of the new religion. His birth was supposed to have been miraculous and to have been foretold by Proteus. After studying at Tarsus, Apollonius betook himself to the temple of Æsculapius at Ægæ, where he is said to have wrought many miracles. Having taken a vow of poverty, he first exhausted all that Greece had

[1] Boissier, i. p. 396, *et seq.*

[2] "Percrebuerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio esse in fatis ut eo tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur." Suetonius, Vespasian, iv.

[3] See Philostratus, "Life of Apollonius of Tyana."

to teach him, and then travelled through Asia Minor, going from city to city, and discoursing like Pythagoras, upon divine rites. He next repaired to Babylon, and consulted the magi and Brahmans, who (it is said) imparted to him some theurgic secrets. He also visited India and disputed with Indian gymnosophists. His return was a triumph. He declared himself to be a prophet. He foretold the plague at Ephesus. In Rome he restored a dead maiden to life. He subsequently visited Egypt, and finally was thrown into prison by Domitian for trying to excite the provinces of Asia Minor against the tyrant. He escaped by an exercise of his miraculous powers, and went to Ephesus, where he proclaimed the death of Domitian at the very moment when it took place. A short time after this he disappeared, and his disciples pretended that he had been translated by the gods. Through this tissue of fables, it is easy to trace the thread of Oriental gnosticism entwined with Greek subtlety, magic blended with asceticism, a combination sure to commend itself to an age of expiring paganism. Apollonius of Tyana was the worthy hero of a time of confused aspirations and universal syncretism. This crafty magician who claimed to be at once a prophet and a deliverer, only achieved such great successes because the Greco-Roman world was awaiting in vague expectancy, the Deliverer who was to come, or rather who was already come in the midst of a despised nation. False Messiahs only succeed in an age which is sighing for Him who is the true Messiah.

Women, those at least who were not carried away by the sensuous and self-indulgent spirit of the age, fostered these popular superstitions. It is always less easy for women than for men to give up all religion. Hence we often find a sceptical husband and a believing wife. There is a striking instance of this in the epitaphs on a tomb at Corcyra. The husband, one Evodus, died first, and gave directions that an inscription should be placed on his tomb, advising all future generations to allow body and soul to enjoy as long as they possibly could, the good things of this life, for "when once the soul has left the body, it will never again see anything of the upper

world." The widow of this Epicurean, on the contrary, declares in the most positive manner in the parallel inscription, that her soul is an inhabitant of heaven while her body remains beneath the ground.[1]

Philosophy was not more successful than religion in putting new life into this moribund society. Like art and literature, philosophy was an importation from Greece, and suffered in Rome from a forced and artificial development. The Roman mind was initiated into the higher problems of Hellenic philosophy, without passing through the introductory stages. Less sensitive than the Greek to fine shades of thought, and caring only for strong well-defined colours, the Roman translated into his exact prose those subtle dialectics, which so skilfully combined heterogeneous elements, and made it possible for a man to be at once a Platonist and a sceptic, an Epicurean and a temperate liver.

In Rome every school was compelled to show its colours and to follow out its principles to their full consequences, even if in doing so it sealed its own doom. Stoicism alone derived some advantage from being transplanted to the capital of the Empire, because it was in harmony with the best aspects of the Roman character.

Outside the schools, properly so called, there was a certain philosophic spirit abroad among the cultivated classes. It was practically a spirit of scepticism, professing ironical scorn for all the nobler aspirations of the soul, and ridiculing everything outside the sphere of pleasure and material interests. This attitude of settled indifference was exactly expressed, not without a touch of cynicism, in the ironical question addressed by Pilate to Jesus Christ. "What is truth?" The influence of this practical scepticism was counterbalanced by another influence, which became increasingly powerful in the decline of the old pagan world. This was the pantheistic tendency leading mankind back by a circuitous path, to the starting point of all idolatries. This tendency, accompanied with gross superstitions, prevailed, as we have seen, in the degenerate paganism of imperial Rome, which

[1] See "Tract on Greek Epigraphs," by Salomon Reinach, pp. 1607, 1707.

was saturated with Oriental ideas. But it insinuated itself also among the higher classes, and gained adherents among high-minded men who would have refused to worship the "great mother," or to associate with her impure priests. Thus Pliny the Elder declared in his great work, which is a vast repertory of the knowledge of his time, that the world is a great eternal divinity, not deriving its existence from any creative cause, nor ever to have an end.[1] Varro, who died more than a century before the Empire, seems to have professed an atheism identical with that of Pliny the Elder. St. Augustine, in the 7th Book of his "City of God," refutes Varro's theory of the "Divine Antiquities." Varro held that there was one soul of the world, the different attributes of which had received the names of divers gods.[2]

If we now turn to the schools of philosophy, we are confronted first with the New Academy, introduced into Rome by Carneades towards the close of the Republic. It was well-adapted to prepare the transition from the stormy liberty of the Republican times to the dull servitude of the Empire. It was its chief honour to number among its disciples the greatest orator and finest mind of the age —Cicero—of whom Pliny the Elder eloquently said that he had broadened the moral boundaries of his father-land.[3] Cicero was not one of those frivolous Sophists, who only tried to make a gain of philosophy. He valued it for its own sake. It was to him the medicine of the soul[4] and he expresses his wish to retire under its shadow for help and protection. He loves truth, but it seems ever to elude him. Having been too early initiated into the results of Greek speculation, he has drunk of a cup that makes the brain reel. A scholar rather than a philosopher, he sinks under the weight of all those systems which he loves to enumerate. He no longer knows where truth is to be found. Nowhere can he see absolute

[1] "Mundum numen esse credo æternum, immensum, neque genitum, neque interiturum unquam." Pliny the Elder, ii. c. 1.
[2] "Animam mundi et partes ejus, id est veros Deos." August., Civ. Dei, vii. 5.
[3] Pliny the Elder, vi. 3.
[4] "Animi medicina," Tusc., iii. 3, v. 1.

truth, for what doctrine has not been refuted? Thus he accepts the conclusions of the New Academy, and endorses its dictum that man cannot rise above the probable.[1] He speaks elsewhere of the sorrowful necessity of abandoning the search after truth.[2] His curious work on the "Nature of the Gods," is a refutation of Epicureanism by Stoicism, and of both by the systems of the New Academy.

In his treatise on Divination, Cicero lays a daring hand on paganism. He tears it to tatters and jeers at it pitilessly; but in all this heap of ruins, he fails to find the materials for a new building, and moreover fully confesses that he doubts of everything, doubts even himself: "*Et mihi ipsi diffidens.*"

Yet the noble aspects of his nature bring him into sympathy with the god of Plato and with his exalted spirituality, which he nobly expounds in his "Hortensius," though never himself arriving at full certainty.[3]

He is less negative in morals. His treatise on duty is full of fine passages breathing the true spirit of Platonism. In his sublime protest against tyranny and usurpation, we catch the last accents of the dying liberty of Rome.[4] Cicero's moral standpoint is however far lower than the Platonist principle of conformity to God. This arises from his failure to grasp spiritual truths. As he was never able to shake off his scepticism, he never has before him an unchangeable divine type, higher than man.[5] He therefore turns necessarily rather to man than to God for the rule of life. This will be found not in holiness but in uprightness, that is to say in that which is generally esteemed among men. Consequently the highest moral motive will be the love of glory. Cicero falls again and again into a happy inconsistency, as when he recognises the divine element of conscience, and proclaims the universality of the sentiment of justice, which

[1] "Tusc.," i. 9.
[2] "Desperatâ cognitione certi." De Bon. et Mal., ii. 14.
[3] See Zeller, "Outlines of Greek Philosophy," p. 284, *et seq.*
[4] "De Offic.," iii. 21.
[5] "Nihil hominem nisi quod honestum decorumque sit aut admirari aut optare opportere." De Offic., i. 20.

even wicked men cannot shake off.[1] On the whole, however, he remains a disciple of Carneades, and all his eloquence, combined with his moral elevation, does not avail to cover the void left by his scepticism.

The philosophy of Epicurus responded so exactly to the instincts of Rome, enriched by the spoils of the world, that if it had not existed it must needs have been invented. It had the good fortune to be introduced by a great poet, whose nervous and graphic style seemed to dignify to some extent a doctrine in itself abject. Lucretius made use of Epicureanism as a weapon against the old mythology, with which he was angrily indignant. "Let us trample religion under our feet," said he; "let it have its turn, and let our victory over it exalt us to heaven!"[2] Religion seemed to him the height of immorality. "What crimes has it not instigated!"[3] He would banish it from the earth, so that the vague terrors of the soul might be dissipated with its imaginary gods.[4] Death ceases to be anything when the soul is admitted to be mortal.[5] Thus by a singular misconception, Lucretius thinks to set man free by taking away his faith in God and immortality, not perceiving that he has hit upon the surest method to destroy liberty itself. The doctrine of Epicurus seems to him the quiet harbour from which he may survey with satisfaction the turmoils of an ambitious philosophy; and he does not see that his vaunted harbour is choked up with corrosive substances which will soon eat away the timbers of his vessel. Better the high seas with all their storms than this soul-deadening calm. This lesson at least imperial Rome read to the world.

In truth, Lucretius did not remain in this commodious haven. More than any of his contemporaries was he tossed about with the stormy waves. He too made shipwreck; and never was there a more bitter confession than that wrung from his lips of the misery of an existence

[1] "Cujus tanta vis est ne illi quidem qui maleficio et scelere nascuntur sine ulla particula justitiæ vivere." De Offic., possent.

[2] "Exæquat victoria cælo." De rerum nat., p. 79.

[3] Ibid., i. 100.

[4] "Diffugiunt animi terrores." Ibid., iii. 16.

[5] "Nil igitur mors est. . . . Quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur." Ibid., iii. 831, 832.

without God. Was it not he who said "*Vita mors est*"? and while he denied that there is a hell beneath our feet, did he not prove that there is a present hell in the breast of the guilty man? This is the true Prometheus gnawed by the insatiable vulture. Before his death Lucretius, by the very voice of his despair, cried out for a deliverer.

The poetical afflatus which transfigured the early Epicureans, headed by Horace, is completely wanting in the same school under the Empire. It becomes simply a school of self-indulgence, and quickly loses the delicate refinement, which in Greece led it to recognise virtue as giving zest to pleasure, and temperance as a means of prolonging it. Its final utterance is simply one of gross sensuality. Plutarch characterises it truly when he makes his Epicurean philosopher say: "Let our whole life be one feast of pleasure!"[1] The influence of such a doctrine makes itself felt alike in the social and the moral life. Its disciples say: "A man must not aim to be a brave warrior, an orator, a public man or a magistrate, he must be content to enjoy life." Plutarch says: "The Epicureans teach men to renounce all political life."[2] Such a philosophy might well please despots, but what a deterioration does it show from the old state of society, in which every citizen lived but for the State!

To Roman Stoicism belongs the honour of having sought to bring about the moral salvation of a moribund state of society, by kindling aspirations after a purer religion; but it failed utterly in its high initiative. In the first place, it lacked the lever of a powerful doctrine, the only one which is really effective in raising men. It had nothing but scorn for the great philosophers who tried to explain things by bold metaphysics. It ridiculed lofty speculation, as the tying of a many-stranded knot just for the pleasure of undoing it; as simply an idle exercise of the faculties, like a game of chess.[3] There is in truth a tone of melancholy beneath this seeming scorn. It hides discouragement bitter to bear. How many disillusions must have come, before a man thus gives up all high research! When

[1] Ἀεὶ δ' ἡμῖν δαὶς τε φιλή. De Epic., c. ii. 1.
[2] Ibid.
[3] "Nectimus nodo ac deinde dissolvimus." Sen., Ep. xlv.

philosophy begins to deal exclusively with the applications of its principles, we are reminded of the prince of Syracuse who from being a king, turned schoolmaster. We do not deny that there is a grandeur in Roman Stoicism; for declamatory and theatrical as it sometimes is, it yet contrasts nobly with the abject life around it. The energy which it develops is, however, wholly passive. Its perfection is simply callousness. "We must climb," says Seneca, "to a height which the shafts of fate cannot reach."[1] A desolating fatalism is at the basis of the whole system. *Fata nos ducunt*:[2] *The fates are our leaders*, this is the motto of the Stoics. It does not compromise them much, or make them dangerous to the Cæsars. For the rest, they know how to accommodate themselves to human weakness; and when utter impassiveness seems a thing too hard to attain, they counsel suicide. The Stoic philosopher says: "Against the ills of life I set the boon of death.[3] All times and all places show us how easy it is to renounce life."

Thus suicide is the final utterance of the Stoic. While the Epicurean said to the Roman of the Decline: "Stifle thy soul with joyance;" the Stoic said, "Kill thyself and die erect in the consciousness of thine own strength." To both alike is lacking the inspiration of a truly noble and fruitful life.

There is one man who may be regarded as the incarnation of Roman Stoicism with all its contradictions. This is Seneca. Might we not think we were listening to a Father of the Church when he eloquently exclaims: "*Deo parere libertas*:[4] to obey God is to be free. I yield to no constraint; I suffer nothing in my own despite; I do not simply submit to God; I make his will mine."[5]

Again he says: "God by affliction proves, strengthens

[1] "Vertex extra omnem teli jactum." Sen., De Const. Sapient.
[2] Sen., "Provid.," c. v.
[3] "Contra injurias vitæ beneficium mortis habeo." Sen., Ep. lxx.; De Prov., c. vi.
[4] Seneca, "Vita Beat.," xv.
[5] "Nihil cogor, nihil patior, invitus, nec servio Deo sed assentio." Vita Beat., v.

and prepares the soul of the just for himself.[1] He wills that we should bear with the thankless, with a soul calm, merciful and great, for persistent good triumphs over ill.[2] The image of God ought not to be wrought in silver or gold; it must be sought in the heart of the just who is true to his source.[3] There is a friendship, or to speak more truly, a likeness between the good man and God.[4] Yet no man can say he is wholly innocent; for in so doing he would speak against the witness of his conscience."[5] In other passages, Seneca seems to anticipate some of the greatest reforms wrought by Christianity. He pleads the cause of the slave; he shows how he has in him the nature of a man, which must "ever be held in honour."

He speaks also eloquently of that great republic which is not confined to any country and to which all men belong. "We have the world for our fatherland."[6] The games of the Circus draw from him this noble exclamation: "Man, that sacred thing to man, is killed for our diversion."[7] The idea of humanity thus shines out in the decline of the old world like the light that comes before the dawn. Cicero had already preached what he called the love of the human race.[8] Plutarch invokes "that Divinity who is neither Greek nor barbarian, the Supreme Intelligence which under various names, presides over the destinies of nations."[9] Seneca had also, like Pliny the Younger and Plutarch, a high ideal of marriage. Plutarch in his "Marriage Precepts," enjoined chastity as a virtue that should go with the bride even into the arms of her husband. She should be gentle, amiable, pure, and yet devoted to the graces, adorned, not with diamonds, but with virtue, and desiring the harmony which results from a perfect union, more than the musician desires the concord of sweet sounds. It is remarkable to see this new

1 "Experitur, indurat, sibi illum præparat." De Provid, vii.
2 "Vincit malos pertinax bonitas." De Beneficies, vii. 5.
3 "Ep.," xxxi.
4 "De Prov.," v.
5 "Non respiciens conscientiam testem." Ira, i.
6 "Patriam mundum professi sumus."
7 "Homo, res sacra homini." Tranquill. Anim., iii.; Ep., xcv.
8 "Caritas generis humani." Cicero, De Bonis et Mal.
9 "Isis et Osiris," c. xvii.

ideal presenting itself to these illustrious pagans as the outcome of the best aspirations of the past. We need not suppose Seneca to have been a disciple of St. Paul in order to understand how such a vision of moral beauty came to him.[1]

It was, however, but a transitory impulse which thus raised expiring paganism above itself. This same Seneca, who seemed at times to have anticipated Christianity itself, fell back again and again into all the errors of the pantheism of the Stoics. He held that God was inseparable from nature.[2] The sun was still a divinity to him. The soul was composed of various elements,[3] among which he distinguished one rational and two irrational parts; the reason was the divine element in man.[4] A man deprived of reason and a wicked man were to him one and the same. There is no such thing as moral freedom. Philosophy has no power to reform our natural character. This moralist, so subtle and at times even sublime, accepts as his hightest ideal, the absolute indifference of the sage, who from the chill heights of reason, casts a pitying glance upon all other beings, not excepting, in his supreme self-complacency,[5] even Jupiter himself.[6]

Epictetus, who lived a short time after him, professed a philosophy no less paradoxical, but his life was more consistent with his doctrine. We might quote a number of admirable maxims of his, collected in the "Enchiridion," a sort of manual edited by his disciples and containing a summary of his teaching. He says: "The oracles are only to be consulted when neither reason nor conscience speak clearly.[7] Conscience requires that we be faithful to our moral principles, as much when we are alone as in the presence of witnesses.[8] No sophism can release us

[1] On this point see M. Boissier, "La religion romaine sous Auguste," vol. ii. c. 7.
[2] "Non Deus sine natura." De Beneficiis, i. 8.
[3] De Ira, ii. 18.
[4] "Summum bonum judicio." Vita Beat., 9.
[5] "Mirator tantum sui." Vita Beat., v.
[6] Clementia, ii. 16.
[7] Enchiridion, c. xxxix.
[8] Ibid., c. xl.

from this obligation. Let us not pretend, in order to gratify our ambition, that we are bound to work for the good of others. Our morality is the good of others."[1] Epictetus enjoins chastity, the forgiveness of injuries, the avoidance of vainglory and even a certain humility, not without some analogy with the Christian virtue.[2] Thus he says: "He who slanders me might truly say far worse things of me if he knew me altogether. The truly wise man neither blames nor praises any one; he complains of no one; he never speaks of himself as if he were anything."[3] It is obvious that Epictetus had come under the influence of a new spirit, and that he himself in some measure anticipated Christianity. He did not, however, wholly escape the hurtful influence of Stoicism. When he speaks of our duties generally, we agree with him; but when he comes to explain what he means by duty, the agreement ceases. His great principle is that man should attach no value to anything except what is essentially part of himself, that is reason, and not to outward good, nor to the body, which is no real part of him.[4] If we assent to this truth, we shall be delivered from all suffering, for we shall see that no possible reverse, sickness or death, can really touch us.[5] We shall thus attain to a philosophical indifference. As it is of the first moment, that we should not allow ourselves to be troubled by anything foreign to ourselves, we cannot be moved by the suffering or sinning of our neighbour. Epictetus classes the wife and children of the philosopher among the things foreign to him. We see at once how wide an interval there is between this morality and that of Christianity. It is indeed a harsh and powerless morality, a morality of abstinence merely. Its final utterance is: "Abstain," *ἀπέχου*.[6] We find the same weakness in the morality of Marcus Aurelius, as the

[1] "Enchiridion," c. xxxi.
[2] Ibid., c. xlviii.
[3] *Οὐδένα ψέγει, οὐδένα ἐπαινεῖ, οὐδένα μέμφεται, οὐδὲν περὶ ἑαυτοῦ λέγει, ὡς ὄντος τινος ἢ εἰδότος τι.* c. lxxii.
[4] Ibid., c. vii.
[5] Ibid., c. xii.
[6] Ibid., c. lxxxi.

character of that virtuous yet persecuting Emperor comes out in the history of the second century.

Such a philosophy, while it did honour to humanity in many aspects, was not capable of effecting a true moral reformation, although its adherents sedulously aimed at this, and founded a sort of philosophic pastorate, which went so far as to supply learned almoners to the great families belonging to their school.[1]

Shortly after the time of Seneca, a noble attempt was made to arrest the universal decadence. There were generous hearts which could not acquiesce in the severe judgment passed by the ancient world upon itself. These rose in defence of the common cause, and like a picked troop, rallying a half-routed army around the standard, they strenuously withstood the general tendency of the times. Not finding in any of the philosophical schools of the day, the elements of a religious restoration, they attached themselves to the system which had done most to exalt Hellenism, namely that Platonist idealism which was the purest glory of the past. Plutarch is the representative of this class of mind. Although belonging to a period immediately following on the appearance of Christianity, he may be included in this brief summary of ancient philosophy at the close of the period of preparation, because he represents a tendency which existed before his time and which he only carried on to its logical issues. He did not leave behind him any new doctrine, for he only accentuated certain points in the teaching of Plato. Thus he more distinctly formulated dualism, and widened the gulf between the supreme God and the creation. The influence of the East is very marked in his teaching; which partakes largely of the syncretism of

[1] On this subject see M. Martha's very interesting book: "Les moralistes sous l'empire." Seneca says of one of those condemned under Caligula, that he was accompanied by his philosopher. "Prosequebatur eum philosophus suus" (De Tranquill., 14). M. Havet has ably strung together the pearls of the Stoic philosophy, in order to show that the Gospel is to be found in Seneca. But he does not bring out sufficiently the fact that the thread on which these pearls were strung together was altogether different from that of Christianity. He acknowledges however on the one hand, that the Stoics of Rome constantly capitulated to the national religion, and on the other hand he admits their inconsistencies and latent scepticism. Vol. ii. pp. 126—128.

the age. The religious restoration which he attempts is only apparent; he does but prepare the way for neo-Platonism. He is constantly carried away by the current he is trying to stem. If he turns to the past it is that the actual state of the world does not satisfy him. This is his way of anticipating the future; moreover he carries into his loving investigation of the past, all the moral and intellectual acuteness of the age in which he lives.

Plutarch's first endeavour is to give vividness to that antiquity of which he would perpetuate the remembrance. He rears a noble monument to the past in his "Lives," and this is his own best title to fame. Herodotus who narrated, as Homer sang, without philosophical bias and intent, had painted in its true colours, this golden age of Greek polytheism. Plutarch, whose great aim is to idealise, writes a special essay to invalidate the testimony of the historian, entitled: "On the Malignity of Herodotus." At the same time, he combats with no little asperity, Stoicism and Epicureanism, which were his natural enemies. On the other hand he exalts the school of Pythagoras beyond measure, because he justly regards it as the precursor of Platonism.[1] On the same grounds, he vindicates all the religious institutions of ancient Greece. In his treatise on the oracles of the Pythoness, he complains of the over-refinement of the Greeks who reject them on account of their inelegant verbiage. His Treatise on Superstition is designed to rebuke incredulity and fanaticism, the two extremes between which the spirit of the age alternated. He would fain bring his contemporaries back to the calm faith which characterises the childhood of nations, but alas! an old and sceptical generation cannot thus become again as a little child. Of this Plutarch is himself an example. It is in vain that he tries to exalt the old religion. He feels that it is passing away, and he pours out an eloquent lamentation over it. He himself no longer believes in it; at least he cannot accept it in the old form. He is fain to trace the same fundamental beliefs in all religions, and in his essay on Isis and Osiris he tries to

[1] See the treatise: *περὶ σαρκοφαγίας.*

establish the identity of the Greek myths with the old religion of Egypt. It would scarcely be possible more completely to belie the genius of Hellenism. Sometimes he falls back on purely physical explanations of the myths. Thus he regards Osiris and Bacchus as personifying the humid element in nature. Sometimes he rises into an idealism foreign to the old mythology, as in his admirable essay on the inscription in the temple at Delphi.

If Plutarch fails in his attempt to restore the past, no writer of the period surpasses him in quick perception of the new ideal which, by a marvellous coincidence, the heathen world came to conceive at the very time when it was about to be at once realised and surpassed. In his essay on Isis and Osiris, Plutarch carefully distinguishes between the deity and his manifestations, which must no more be confounded than we confound the anchor and sails of a vessel with the pilot who steers it. On the front of Apollo's Temple in Delphi was the word :—*Εἶ, Thou art.* In this Plutarch read the true name of God. "We do not at all essentially partake of being; for every mortal nature, being in the midst between generation and corruption, exhibits only an appearance and an obscure and unreal opinion of itself. . . . What then is it that has really a being? That which is eternal, unbegotten, and incorruptible, to which no time brings a change."[1]

"I am therefore of opinion that this syllable signifies neither number, order nor connection, nor any other of the deficient parts, but is a self-perfect appellation and salutation of the God which brings the speaker to the conception of the power of the God at the very moment of uttering it. For the God in a manner calls upon every one of us who comes hither with this salutation, 'Know thyself,' which is nothing inferior to All hail. And we again, answering the God, say to him *Εἶ, Thou art*, attributing to him the true, unfeigned and sole appellation of being, as agreeing to him alone."[2]

"Let us awake," Plutarch says again; "we have been

[1] Of Εἶ at Apollo's Temple in Delphi, § 18, 19.
[2] Ibid., §17.

dreaming long enough. Let us no more confound the workman with his work. . . . "[1]

The question of the divine justice is treated with great elevation of thought in his treatise, "The Punishment of the Wicked; why so long delayed." The philosopher rises almost to the Christian view of trial. Punishment, according to him, always has a moral end in view. If naughty children are punished, if the chastisement of a crime rests upon an entire race, it is because a race is in truth one moral being always in connection with its source and head. It not only owes its being to him; it is in a manner part of himself, so that he is chastised in its chastisement.[2] We marvel at such an insight into the great mystery of the solidarity of the human race.

In the same treatise Plutarch sets forth in striking figures his faith in immortality, dimmed though it is by the incoherence of his beliefs as to the future life. He says: "Can we think that God so little considers his own actions, or is such a waster of his time in trifles, that if we had nothing of divine within us, nothing that in the least resembled his perfection, nothing permanent and stable, but were only poor creatures, that (according to Homer's expression) faded and dropped like withered leaves, and in a short time too, yet he should make so great account of us—like women that bestow their pains in making little gardens, no less delightful to them than the gardens of Adonis, in earthen pans and pots, as to create us souls to blossom and flourish only for a day, in a soft and tender body of flesh, without any firm and solid root of life, and then to be blasted and extinguished in a moment upon every slight occasion. . . . Therefore for my part I will never deny the immortality of the soul."[3]

Unhappily a vein of dualism runs through the whole of this grand philosophy which is a distant echo of Platonism. But the perception of the distance which divides the world as it now is, from God, made Plutarch keenly alive to the need of a mediator. Hence the doctrine of demons or of intermediate deities destined to bridge over

[1] Ἐγείρωμεν.
[2] Ἐξ αὐτοῦ γὰρ, οὐχ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γέγονεν.
[3] "Punishment of the Wicked," etc., § 17.

the abyss between us and the supreme God. Demons, according to Plutarch, occupy a place between gods and men, and establish a sort of communication between them.[1] This idea, which is essentially Oriental, became in time, the parent of the Neo-Platonist doctrine of emanation, and of gnosticism. It was based upon an erroneous principle, but it blended with it an element of truth, namely, the necessity of a mediation which should form a link between heaven and earth. In short, Plutarch brought together in his system all the higher elements and aspirations of Hellenism, but he did not escape its imperfections.

No school of philosophy could save the ancient world. Philosophy, in its best representatives, was capable of dimly conceiving but not of achieving the deliverance for which the world was groaning. Its impotence was moral rather than intellectual. It was too fettered by fear of consequences to have much influence on the world. No philosopher dared openly avow what he thought. All pretended to have some secret doctrine which they confided only to the initiate; but in public they bowed before the god whom in private they denied. Cicero says candidly: "In the question concerning the nature of the gods, the first enquiry is whether there are gods or not. It would be dangerous, I believe, to take the negative side before a public auditory, but it is very safe in a discourse of this kind and before this company. I, who am a priest, and who think that religions and ceremonies ought certainly to be maintained, am certainly desirous to have the existence of the gods not only fixed in opinion, but proved to demonstration, for many notions flow into and disturb the mind which sometimes seem to convince us that there are none." [2]

Seneca did not hesitate to say that the practices of the popular religion ought to be observed by the wise man, not in order to commend himself to the gods, but to conform to the laws. St. Augustine rightly denounces such conduct. He says: "The man whose mind had been enlightened by philosophy, and who yet under pretext that he was a Roman senator, went on, outwardly

[1] See the Essay on the Genius of Socrates.
[2] Cicero, "Of the Nature of the Gods," i. p. 22.

observing that which in secret he denied, was performing the part of an actor, not upon the stage, but in the temple of the gods: and his duplicity was all the more blameworthy because it was taken in good faith by the people, so that he deceived and misled them at the very foot of the altars."[1] But Seneca puts into the lips of the populace, the most damning charge against the philosophers of the day, when he says: "You speak in one sense and act in another; *Aliter loqueris aliter vivis.* You do not the things that you say."[2]

Seneca gives us the jesting remarks of the crowd who ironically asked this eloquent apostle of poverty, if he was heaping up tons of gold in his cell. He pronounced his own condemnation and that of all the moral theorists who do not touch with the tip of their fingers the burden they are so ready to lay upon others, when he said: "We must choose as our guide, a man who is more to be admired in what he is seen to be, than in what he is heard to say."[3]

The philosophy of these unsettled times, with its want of candour, and its practical inconsistencies could not be such a guide. Nothing but sincerity carries any power with it in the moral world; all duplicity is weakness. The philosophers were very conscious of their lack of power. "Now that we are alone," says Cicero, "we can enquire into the truth without stirring hatred."[4] The great orator had not learned, like St. Paul or even like Socrates, that the truth requires witnesses ready to suffer all things for its sake and is only revealed to men who have the courage of their convictions. While the Roman philosophers who met in secret to discuss their esoteric doctrines, rejoiced in their isolation from mankind, the martyrs, who had no earthly future to promise their adherents but suffering and death, were surrounded by

[1] "Illustris populi Roman senator, agebat quod arguebat, quod culpabat adorabat." Aug., Civ. Dei, vi. 11.

[2] Sen., "Vita Beat.," 17.

[3] "Eum elige adjutorem quem magis admireris cum videris quam cum audieris." Ep. lii.

[4] "Soli sumus; licet verum exquirere sine invidiâ." Cicero, De Divinatione, ii. 13.

an eager throng of disciples. "There is a fascination in these sufferings" said Tertullian. "*Est illecebra in illis.*" It was this stern fascination of a firm and indomitable faith which was wanting to the philosophy of the decline. Its powerlessness became very manifest when it was brought into contact with the great sorrows of human life. Cicero and Seneca tried the power of their doctrine on friends plunged into deep suffering and distress. They counselled resignation to an irreparable evil; recommended the distractions of study, of active exertion, in short of forgetfulness, which is virtually moral death. Seneca goes so far as to say to an afflicted friend: "Thou hast lost the object of thy affection, seek another."[1] To such miserable comforters, Pliny the Younger cries out in anguish of heart: "Give me some fresh comfort, great and strong, such as I have never yet heard or read. Everything that I have read or heard comes back now to my memory, but my sorrow is too deep to be reached by it."

From this brief review of the schools of philosophy, we conclude that mankind had now reached the point to which God would bring it. The desire for salvation had come out purer and more distinct from its various mythological evolutions, and the Greco-Roman world had abundantly proved its own incapacity to satisfy that desire. Fallen man had never lost for a single day, his sense of the need of pardon and reparation, as is shown by the multitude of sacrifices and the smoke of the holocausts rising to heaven on all sides, and uttering an inarticulate cry for mercy. From the time that the idea of a holy God had presented itself to the conscience, this desire for pardon and restoration had acquired new meaning and had become purer and deeper. But the ancient world not only had no response to give to this cry of the wounded conscience, it could not retain in its purity, this conception of one supreme God, even after it seemed to have definitely grasped it. It constantly relapsed into dualism. When Plutarch says that "Nature produces nothing here but what is mixed and tempered,

[1] "Aliqua magna nova solatia." Pliny, Ep., i. 12.

(*i.e.* made up of bad as well as good) and must certainly therefore have a peculiar source and origin of evil as well as of good;"[1] he gave the exact resultant of all ancient philosophy.

This fundamental error prevented the complete triumph of spiritualism even in the best, and caused the many to be carried away by the current of materialism. Hence the painful discrepancy between the real and the ideal; the paradoxes on every hand; the contrast between actual degradation and the sublime vision of unattainable purity. Hence also the irrepressible feeling after an unknown God.

This desire was indeed dim and undefined. Though it was present in all classes of society, it lay buried deep in the heart, and only the leaping sparks now and again betrayed the hidden fire. It was never fully recognised till the religion of Christ had come; for great religious movements not only satisfy the cravings of which humanity is conscious, but make manifest to it its deeper needs. This explains the rapidity of the early conquests of Christianity in the pagan world. If it met with opposition no less strong and determined than the welcome which it won, this was because the masses were too deeply corrupted not to hate the revealing light. This terrible corruption of the Greco-Roman world, at the time when the greatest revolution of history was about to be effected, is only another proof that the fulness of the time had come.

As we have said more than once, there is a world within a world—one which sets itself against the designs of God, another which apprehends and acquiesces in them. The disproportion of numbers between the two is of little moment. The spiritual election which fulfils the will of God and truly interprets the lessons life is designed to teach, is often a very small minority. It is none the less certain that God makes use of it for the accomplishment of His purposes. The privileged few are thus made the medium of blessing to all. In these hearts first arises the dawn of the new day.

[1] Plutarch, "Isis and Osiris," § 45.

In order to determine if the world was prepared eighteen centuries ago to receive Christianity, we must look higher than the reckless crowd and the degraded aristocracy who seem, as they throng the Circus in Rome, to forget that life has any serious meaning at all. We must ask ourselves what honest hearts thirsting for truth must have felt in such an age, and we learn this best from the testimony of lofty poetry which is the voice of the spirit. It alone reveals those sacred depths, of which the soul itself was perhaps but vaguely conscious till thought thus shaped itself in creative words. Virgil was the spokesman of this travailing world which knew it was in its death-pangs, though it set, like the sun, in power and glory. Never was verse more exquisite, never did its suggestive harmonies find a more thrilling response in the heart of man; for it is the magic of great poetry to awaken a poetry grander still in the depths of man's nature, with fuller chords of "linked sweetness long drawn out." The tones of the inspired lyre move the soul to groanings of strong desire that cannot be uttered. Therefore we learn more from Virgil of that which was stirring the minds of men, than from all the historians, or even from the most outspoken letters of the greatest spirits of the age. Beyond question he is its true representative, in his devotion to the glory of Rome, and in the sincerity with which he strives, by means of his grand epic, to help forward the work of national and religious restoration undertaken by Augustus, a work which he admires not as a courtier but as a patriot. But who does not feel that his pathetic and melancholy genius embraces an area far wider than the political horizon? Standing on the confines of two periods, no one, I suppose, felt more keenly than he did, the calamities that befel the fatherland. Removed to a distance from his beloved Mantua, like a twig torn by a tempest from the branch, his particular suffering became the echo of the suffering of all. Hence his longing for retirement and for converse with nature, which he loves with all the passion of a modern poet. He feels that there is in nature a mysterious sympathy with his sadness, and he asks her to comfort him like a sister beloved. In describing nature, he uses figures full of tender feeling,

as when he asks the vinedresser to be gentle in his pruning of the vine.[1] In one grand verse he likens great sorrows to the great sea, whose solemn surging makes echo to their sobs:

"Cunctæque profundum
Pontum adspectabant flentes."[2]

When he speaks of the "*amica silentia lunæ*," it is because he has felt the gracious peace of the quiet night come down upon his soul. Is it not this sympathy with nature which makes him see the divine flowing through her, like the blood in the veins? Her great mysterious voices seem to him the echo of our griefs. The murmur of the waters repeats the name of the beloved wife, torn from the embrace of her husband.[3]

"Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripæ."

It is this dear name which the passionate song of the bird of spring seems to warble plaintively upon the perfumed air:

"Et mæstis late loca quæstibus implet."[4]

This clinging to nature is, in troublous times, the sure sign of a mortal weariness of soul under the weight of human destiny. It is this feeling which reveals to Virgil those tears filling the eyes of all created things ("sunt lachrymæ rerum") which in the childhood of the world man never saw. Throughout the immortal work of Virgil, there breathes a tender pathos. We know in what glowing tints he painted love in the 4th Book of his Æneid, and with what searching analysis he laid bare its anguish. It is this sensibility which constitutes the pathos of so many of the episodes of his great poem. We feel that the poet is ever rising above the particular sorrows of his heroes, to a vaster sorrow still—that of the human race. As he watches the shades hurrying down to earth, Æneas

[1] "Parcendum teneris." Georg., ii. 363.
[2] Æneid., v. 614, 615.
[3] Georg., iv. 527.
[4] Ibid., 515.

says, "Whence comes to these sad souls, this senseless love of life?"

"Quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido?"[1]

"Is not everything upon earth plunging into inevitable death?"

"Sic omnia fatis
In pejus ruere."[2]

Virgil represented the best tendencies of his age when he made himself the organ of all that was purest and noblest in the old philosophy. Plato as supplemented by Pythagoras was his guide to the Elysian fields, as he himself was to be the guide of Dante on a like pilgrimage. In poetry worthy of Phædo, he expressed the lofty intuitions of Greek philosophy, as to the immortality of the soul, and the sanctions of eternal justice. And yet these prospects were so dim, even when overshone with the radiance of his genius, that they neither satisfied nor comforted him. His thoughts still reached forward questioningly into the future. He had a presentiment that some great crisis was at hand, that the old world was to give place to the new. It matters little that he fixed his hopes on an unknown child who has left no trace in the memory of men. They had a far wider scope. The branch on which for a moment they rested, was too frail to sustain them, and they soared again with broader sweep, into the unknown. Virgil dreams of a time when all traces of the crimes of men shall be effaced, when the earth shall be delivered from the sorrow that overwhelms it:

"Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetuâ solvent formidine terras."[3]

"Lo! in the coming age all things rejoice!"

"Aspice, venturo lætantur ut omnia sæclo."[4]

It was specially in this aspect that Virgil was the inspired voice of his generation. Victor Hugo has well

[1] Æneid., ii. 72.
[2] Georg., i. 199, 200.
[3] Eclogue, iv. 13, 14.
[4] Ibid., iv. 52.

expressed in the following lines the mysterious expectancy which filled the air at this period :

"Le vers porte à sa eime une lueur étrange
C'est qu'à son insu même il est une des âmes
Que l'Orient lointain teignait de vagues flammes,
C'est qu'il est un des cœurs que, déjà, sous les cieux
Dorait le jour naissant du Christ mystérieux."

It is easy to understand how Virgil came to be Christianised in early legend. His feast was kept in the Middle Ages, as one of the prophets of Christ. St. Paul was supposed to have visited his tomb in Naples, and to have lamented over it thus: "O greatest of poets, what had I not made of thee, had I but met thee in thy lifetime!" [1]

We conclude with M. Boissier that Virgil was one of those who prepared the way for the triumph of Christianity without knowing it [2] and with M. Duruy we say, that like a new Columbus, he pointed through the mists of the West, to the new world which was to come forth from them.[3] Dante gave a perfectly true picture of Virgil, when he likened him to a man going out into the night, and carrying behind him a torch of which he makes no use, but which lightens the path of those who come after.

Every impartial historian recognises from his own point of view the attitude of expectancy in which souls were standing at this time. "Every man," says Lucretius, "is groping after the way of life." It seems strange to find this great Epicurean poet thus anticipating the words afterwards spoken by Paul at Athens. M. Havet says: "There was a prevailing idea that the end of the world was at hand. With this idea of destruction was blended that of a new beginning, and this predominated in the spirits that sought some hope to cling to. These asked and waited for a Saviour."[4] We know that this eminent

[1] "Quem te, inquit, reddidessim
Si te vivum invenissem
Poetarum maxime.

[2] Boissier, i. p. 284. [3] Duruy, "Histoire des Romains," iii. p. 38.
[4] Havet, vol. i. p. 188.

writer does not retract anything from the severity of his judgment of Christianity, the sole merit of which, in his eyes, is that it prepares the way for its own destruction and that of the religions of the past, thus leaving a clear course for free thought. We only cite this passage therefore, in order to show that even he admits this attitude of universal expectation. M. Boissier regards it altogether from our point of view. He says: "It was Christianity which gave full satisfaction to all the vaguely felt needs of humanity which none of the old religions had really met. Christianity probably would not have spread so rapidly a century earlier when Cicero was winning the applause of the crowd by such words as these: "Do not think that a god falls down upon us from heaven, and that, as on the stage, he comes to mingle with and to converse with men." A God thus coming down from heaven for the salvation of men was the very God whom men were looking for. It was well that he should be born in a time of such religious agitation; it was better still that this agitation had hitherto led to only incomplete results."[1] In the midst of prevailing doubt the soul was anxiously seeking some settled belief and was weary in its bootless quest. Plato had already said: "A man should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them; or if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life—not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him."[2]

On all hands men were in search of this "word of God," which might bring them safely into port. In illustration of this we may give the confession of one beautiful soul. We quote from an apocryphal writing of the second century, a passage which is free from the legendary superstitions and doctrinal subtleties that too often deface it. "From my earliest youth" says Clement, the hero of the "Clementines," "I was exercised with doubt. I know not how it took possession of my soul.

[1] Boissier, vol. ii. pp. 451, 452.
[2] Plato, "Phædo," § 85.

I used to say to myself. 'When I am dead, shall I be really annihilated, and will no one think of me any more? Then it were as well never to have been born. When was the world created? What was before the world? What will become of it in the future?' These thoughts pursued me night and day, and the more I tried to shake them off, the more my trouble grew. I was assured that there was a heavenly guide to lead me into truth, and I sought him from place to place. Exercised with these thoughts from my youth up, I passed through the schools of the philosophers, and found in them only conflicting opinions subverting one another. Now one would prove the immortality of the soul, and another would demonstrate that it was mortal. Thus I was tossed about from one doctrine to another, and became more wretched than ever. As the whirlwind of contrary ideas carried me hither and thither, I sighed from the depths of my soul."[1]

To lead humanity thus to sigh after deliverance, was the great design of God in this work of preparation. After reading Cicero's "Hortensius," which contains in a concentrated form the very best that the ancient world had to give, St. Augustine says: "Then I arose and went to Christ." How many noble spirits before the coming of Christ would fain have done the same. Such words show conclusively that the fulness of the times was come. We may conclude with these words of the poet Prudentius:—

"Christo jam venienti
Credo parata via est."

[1] "Eoque magis in profundo pectoris cruciabar." Recognitiones, c. i
[2] "Contra Symm.," ii. 120.

CONCLUSION.

IN order to complete this comparative history of the religions of the ancient world, we ought now to trace through its various phases, the religious development of Judaism. This we may attempt to do in a future volume, which would be the best introduction to the "History of the Apostolic Age."

For the present we shall simply indicate what was the leading and formative thought, so to speak, of this necessary evolution, without which the work of preparation could not be complete.

In order to determine its true character and its relations to the development of historic paganism, it will be needful to recapitulate briefly the general plan of that development as sketched in our Introduction.

Every man who believes in God, sees in history the steady carrying out of God's designs, through all the fluctations and oppositions of man's will, which, perverted as it is by sin, is always recognised and respected in God's dealings with man. Under the control of a God who is at once love and holiness, history can be nothing else than the progressive accomplishment of a work of restoration and salvation. This work, unless it is to be a merely magical process, must correspond to moral dispositions adapted to it and prepared to be benefited by it. The work of preparation consists in the development of these dispositions, which are summed up in the desire for salvation, becoming ever more intense and distinct to the consciousness. To make man realise his own helplessness and at the same time look for deliverance, is the sum and substance of the work of preparation, alike in Judaism and paganism. This design underlies all the institutions of the Jews and all their religious faith, and

comes out more and more in their history. The conditions under which these spiritual aspirations are developed are indeed very various, but even this variety subserves the end in view and never effaces its identity.

If we wish to determine what distinguishes Judaism as a whole, from Paganism, we shall observe that the Jews alone are honoured with positive divine revelations. They are not, on that account, exempt from the awful ordeals of free will. Their very position of privilege lays upon them a more solemn responsibility which makes their condemnation the greater whenever they fall into idolatry. The Jew is not treated as a favourite who, offend as he may, is forgiven beforehand; rather he is chosen to perform a great ministry for the benefit of the whole world. Hence he is doubly guilty if he fails in this. Even in that case he will not be utterly consumed. Punishment is never the vengeance of a jealous God; rather is it the rod in the hands of a father. The Divine goodness never ceases to manifest itself to the chosen people in a peculiar manner, both by present deliverances and by promises for the future. It is none the less true, that the history of the Jews does not differ essentially from the history of mankind, as it unfolds itself all over the world, with its alternations of glory and shame, triumph and defeat, light and shadow. In the end the light vanquishes the darkness, piercing it with the rays of dawn. The whole history of Israel is finely symbolised in the vision of Elijah in the cleft of Horeb, when the "still, small voice" which speaks to his heart of a God of love, is preceded by the whirlwind, the earthquake and the consuming fire. The Lord manifests Himself first in these forms of terror, in order to break down the resistance which hinders the free course of His revelation of mercy. The chosen nation has to be placed under the same stern discipline as the pagan world, because it also has revolted against God, frustrating His purposes towards it by its sins and follies, and obscuring, though it could not extinguish, the pure light of revelation. We must never forget that the august truths which Israel has to convey to the world, reach us through this often faulty and distorted human medium.

Not only is the revelation made to the Jews given gradually, so as to be adapted to their stage of moral and religious development, but it also corresponds in its broader phases with the various degrees of evolution in the pagan world. We have seen how that world was left to itself, to work out an experience by which it came to apprehend something of the true God and of His merciful purposes towards it, and at the same time proved its own impotence to save itself. Doubtless the Spirit of God was always brooding upon the waters, and acting upon the conscience of men even in the pagan world, and the whole course of history was controlled by His sovereign will. But in the land of Judæa there was not only more immediate divine direction, but also a positive revelation. There the true God made Himself known by words and deeds, and not merely through the phenomena of nature and the intuitions of the human soul. It was needful that there should be at least one land purged from idolatry, where Messiah might be born under the shadow of the altar of the only God. It was needful further, that the desire after salvation should be freed from all alloy, and should burn as a pure flame in sanctified souls, which had some apprehension of its true meaning. Without Judaism, the expectation of the God of the future would have been too vague, too much confused with lower elements; on the other hand, without the anxious seeking after God in the pagan world, the desire of the nations would have been less intense, less eager; it would not have been the despairing cry of a world that had laboured in vain and spent its strength for nought. Thus the two paths by which humanity had been led along, converged and met at last in that highway of the desert, where the voice was heard crying that He who should come was at length come.

We must not forget that the two great sections into which mankind was divided religiously before the coming of Christ, came into frequent contact on that soil of Asia which was the battlefield of the historic nations of the old world. These communications became more frequent than ever on the eve of the new era. The sacred books of the Jews were translated in Alexandria and entered

into the commerce of ideas and beliefs. There was not an important city of the Greco-Roman world, which had not its synagogue. In this intellectual and moral exchange, the Jews not only gave, they also received, and received much; acquiring not indeed any moral truths higher than they already possessed, but new spiritual impulses. Thus without detracting anything from that which was directly divine in their religious development, we observe that it always corresponded with the evolution going on in paganism generally, by which it was being purified from its baser elements. The history of Israel is, in a word, the history of the human conscience in the ancient world, as that conscience became illuminated by a revelation which was ever in harmony with its highest aspirations. Thus regarded, Judaism is no longer an exceptional and arbitrary development. Its history is not, so to speak, a Divine *coup d'état*; it is rather the transfiguration of the general history of the ancient world in the period of preparation. We find in it the same halting-places on the long pilgrimage to the land of promise, but they are shone upon with a light from heaven, which changes the dim twilight of the soul into a divine day.

The institutions which at first seem to lend an altogether exceptional character to Judaism, correspond so exactly to the needs of the heart of man in this period of preparation, that we find substantially the same institutions in that Gentile world upon which the Jews looked down with scorn, and from which they were separated by impassable barriers. The same spirit of separatism ran through the whole life of the Jews, and was expressed in the setting apart of a priestly caste (distinct from the rest of the nation), of a holy day and a holy place. By this trenchant distinction between the sacred and profane, the lesson was forcibly carried home that the ordinary course of life, and the earthly abode of man, are both defiled by sin till the blessed time of reconciliation between a guilty race and God, shall have come. There was a dim prophecy of this glorious consummation in these institutions themselves, which were all to be merged in a broader universalism; for a time was prophesied when all men would be priests to God, all days holy days, and the whole earth a sanc-

tuary. If we look closely, we shall see that all the religious institutions of the ancient world rested on the same separatist basis, and we shall observe also that the children of Israel passed through the same historical vicissitudes as other nations.

These general ideas of Judaism are confirmed by the details of its religious evolution, on which we cannot now dwell. We have said enough to show that when the star of the first Noël ascended in silent splendour the darkened skies, the fulness of the time was come.

Only one word more in conclusion. From the review we have taken of the religious evolution of the ancient world, it seems to us clear that the Founder of the religion of the Gospel was not a merely historic personage, and that that religion was not the mere confluence of the currents of earlier religions. We have certainly not depreciated the partial view of truth, which the conscience had come to apprehend through its own deeper intuitions, or through the stern teaching of experience. We have freely admitted that it sometimes set before itself a high moral ideal. It had some perception of the God whose sacred organ it is—a God distinct from the world, a living and personal God, at once holy and merciful. It never gave up a belief in the future life; indeed it clung to it with ever growing earnestness. It had moreover some intuitions of that higher morality, which sets free from the bondage of mere pietism, and recognises that he who loves God must love mankind also, and that justice must be tempered by a world-embracing pity.

We gladly acknowledge these testimonies to the inalienable kinship of man to a God greater than all the idols and philosophic creations of the brain. Nothing is gained for the Gospel by depreciating and vilifying human nature; for in its depths, however tarnished by sin, lies the first link of the "golden chain by which the whole round earth is every way bound around the feet of God." What we have to do is to eliminate the true from the false by a careful sifting of facts. Now, unless we have been altogether mistaken as to the religious and philosophical development of the ancient world, it seems to us clear, that while it may at times have caught a

glimpse of the moral ideal, human and divine, it did no more than this, and never succeeded in permanently dispersing the clouds which intercepted the fair vision. There was not one of the religions of pagan antiquity, which did not fall back from the heights of prophetic intuition slowly and painfully climbed, into the old pantheistic naturism. There was not one of the philosophers, not even Socrates or Plato, who, on the testimony of the fairest and most impartial historians, ever rose above the dualism which is logically the negation of theism. Nor did the belief in a future life ever attain to a full and satisfied assurance. Philosophy never got beyond the "Perhaps" of Phædo, and the popular beliefs were always marred by terrors and miserable superstitions.

Will any one affirm that if only all these religions and philosophies had been fused together in one crucible by Alexandrine syncretism, a stream of pure light would have been produced? We ask in reply: How could their fusion have supplied that which was lacking to them all? With regard to the higher morality, which endeavoured to free religion from superstition, and through the lips of Cicero and Seneca, spoke constantly of a love of the human race, we have seen that the beacon thus lighted upon the chill heights of an esoteric philosophy, only shone for a few elect souls, and even these were far from practising what they professed. The tide of degrading superstition, meanwhile, rose higher day by day. An implacable despotism asserted the brutal right of might to crush the weak, and to make a stepping-stone of them through every grade of the social hierarchy, from the home of the private citizen to the palace of the Cæsar.

It cannot then be maintained, even if religion is reduced to a mere purified theism, that the pagan world in its latest stage of development had nothing to learn from Christ. Something far more was needed than a mere theoretical revelation about God and man. The whole ancient world felt this, and this is the noblest aspect of its religious evolution. It would be an absolute misconception of the meaning of that evolution, to suppose that it was only tending to a sort of natural religion, consisting

of certain dogmas, imposed by infallible authority. On the contrary, its great characteristic was an intense, ardent faith which nothing could quench, in the necessity of direct communication with the mysterious divinity which constantly eluded its grasp. It was a vehement desire amounting to an agony, to discover some sacrifice which might reconcile an offended God, and bring man again into unity and harmony with him. Nor did this desire remain a mere sentiment. It became embodied in positive rites, in forms of worship which represented sometimes the terrors, sometimes the aspirations of the awakened conscience. That for which the ancient world cried out with all its voices and from all its altars, was a great act of reparation; nay more, it sought for a God who should be at once the Author of reconciliation and its surety. As this attempt was perpetually renewed, it is plain that it had not yet achieved its end, and that some great transaction yet remained to take place between earth and heaven. Judaism itself had no deliverance to bring; it had only symbols and promises. To assert, therefore, as M. Havet does, that Christianity was everywhere present in a state of society which had not yet received Christ in person, is to misconceive the essential character of the new religion. Its idiosyncrasy is that it is no longer a promise or a foreshadowing, but the actual fulfilment of the work of Divine love, bringing to mankind the very thing which for long ages it had been vainly striving and seeking after. It was the deepening consciousness of the failure of all its own efforts and weary gropings after truth, that made the world the more ready to receive Christianity as the gift of God.

We have already given elsewhere our views of the world's Deliverer.[1] It may suffice for us to say here that in our view, Christ effectively wrought out that work of reconciliation which was the felt need of man. He set before the conscience an ideal so sublime, and yet so truly human, that it satisfied and even surpassed man's highest aspirations. His soul, like a pure mirror, reflected the image of God, as at once the High and Holy One, and our

[1] "Jesus Christ, His Life, Times, and Work."

Heavenly Father. Nor did He only bring God near to man in this new and tender relation; He also reconciled man to God, making peace by the blood of His cross. Though He was put to death by the hands of men, who could not endure the presence of such awful holiness, yet He died for man and saved him by His dying, offering to God as man's representative, the true atoning sacrifice of love—the full, living surrender of heart and life and will, sealed by His blood. A light never to fade away breaks upon the darkness of death, as the stone is rolled away from the sepulchre on the first Easter morning, and He who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life, comes forth.

The Deliverer is at length come! He, for whom the old Chaldean was yearning, when, with terror-stricken conscience, he used the incantation to his seven demons, and weeping for his sins, called upon a God whom he knew not. The Deliverer is come! whom Egypt dimly foresaw when she spoke in words which she understood not, of a God who was wounded in all the wounds of His creatures. The Deliverer is come! for whom the magi of Iran strained their eyes, looking for a Saviour greater than Zoroaster. The Deliverer is come! for whom the India of the Vedas panted when she was lifted for a moment above her pantheism by the intuition of a Holy God—One who could satisfy the burning thirst for pardon, which none of the springs of her own religion would avail to quench. The Deliverer is come! the true Son of God, who alone can lead mankind to battle with full assurance of victory; the God, whose image dimly discerned, had floated in fantastic incarnations through the waking dreams of the Brahman. The Deliverer is come! He who can have compassion on the sufferer and on all who are desolate and oppressed, without plunging Himself and the whole world into the Buddhist sea of annihilation. The Deliverer is come! He whom Greece had prefigured at Delphi and at Eleusis—the God who saves because He also has suffered. The Deliverer is come! He who was foretold and foreshadowed by the holy religion of Judæa, which was designed to free from every impure element, the universal aspiration of mankind.

He has come to obey, to love, to die, and by dying to save.

Whether men will have it so or no, the Cross of Christ divides two worlds, and forms the great landmark of history. It interprets all the past; it embraces all the future; and however fierce the conflict waged around it, it still is, and shall be through all the ages, the symbol of victory.

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